GRADUATION RATES

AND ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN WASHINGTON STATE

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A Report to the Academic Achievement & Accountability Commission
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Mary Bourguignon, Steeple-jack Consulting
Mary Beth Celio

Additional copies of this report may be obtained by calling (360) 586-9284. The report is available on-line at www.k12.wa.us/accountability and in alternative formats, upon request. For further information, please contact:

Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission
Post Office Box 47220
Olympia, WA 98504-7270
(360) 586-9284

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington state high school graduation rates have been in the news a great deal recently, as new studies have calculated the rates to be much lower than previously believed, estimating that nearly one-third of Washington students drop out before they graduate from high school. This paper responds to those reports.

- It analyzes graduation rates through a detailed review of district enrollment, dropout, and graduation data, and recommends data collecting and reporting strategies.
- It summarizes ways that dropout and graduation rates are reported and evaluated in accountability systems in other states and recommends accountability strategies for Washington State.
- It reviews the factors that cause students to drop out and the attributes of successful dropout prevention programs, and recommends dropout prevention strategies for Washington State.

WASHINGTON'S GRADUATION RATE

The authors' analysis of Washington State high school enrollment and graduation data estimates that **Washington State's high school graduation rate is 70.1%**. That is, only 70.1% of all students who enroll in 9th grade in a Washington State public school (excluding those who transfer out of the state or to a private school) graduate from high school four years later. This rate is similar to the rate estimated by a Gates Foundation-funded study conducted earlier this year, as well as with recent OSPI graduation rate estimates.

HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

States around the country have implemented a broad array of approaches to hold schools and districts accountable for dropout and graduation rates. Some states keep dropout and graduation rate reporting completely distinct from their academic accountability systems. Other states report dropout and graduation rates in their accountability systems, but do not evaluate these rates. Still other states report dropout and graduation rates in their accountability systems and evaluate school and district progress toward goals for these rates. The lessons learned by other states that have implemented different accountability approaches provide Washington State with useful guidance.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

Schools and districts that are successful in preventing students from dropping out share five basic attributes: they are aware of students' needs; they intervene quickly when students have problems; they develop mentoring relationships between adults and students; they offer students alternative opportunities to learn; and they pursue school reform when needed for large-scale change. Applying these attributes can help schools and districts in Washington State reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following their research, the authors have developed fiveix recommendations on dropout and graduation rate reporting and accountability for schools and districts in Washington State.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Assign a unique identifier to every student as s/he begins school. Accurate data is the first step in dropout prevention. But the current database for Washington State enrollment is filled with duplicate and inaccurate records because of the difficulty of accurately accounting for students who transfer between programs and schools. Using a student's Social Security Number as a unique identifier would provide more accurate information about students and their needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Use a cohort-based graduation rate as the key statistic in schools' success at helping students finish school, and report it using 7th grade enrollment as the baseline. Dropout rate calculations can be confusing, both because there are many different ways to report them (by year, over four years, in the population at large) and because it is difficult to determine accurately whether individual students should be counted as dropouts or not. This confusion can be avoided by making a cohort-based graduation rate – beginning at the start of middle school – the key measure of school and district success at helping students stay in school.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Devote enough resources to the development of the P210 database to make it a usable resource for trend analysis within the next three years.

The discussion earlier in this report noted the inaccuracies and difficulties inherent in the P210 database. These problems are not at all unusual for a new data collection system, and, in fact, have been experienced by school and district administrators in a number of other states. Increasing the accuracy of that database by assisting data entry personnel at individual schools must become a priority.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Use the authority provided by the Legislature to require schools and districts to report graduation rates in the state accountability system. After three years, determine whether specific evaluative measures or goals for graduation rates should be set.

Washington State should require that graduation rates (in the cohort format recommended earlier) be reported in the state accountability system. However, it is premature at this time to set goals by which these rates would be evaluated for specific schools or districts. Instead, the A+ Commission should spend the next three years working to improve the accuracy of the data that is collected and studying school and district rates, and should determine appropriate evaluative measures after that time.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Use nationally-tested attributes of successful dropout prevention programs to focus on two groups of students: those who indicate (by behavior or grades) that they are at risk for dropping out; and those who have dropped out but can be helped to transition back into school.

Interviews with officials in other states offer simple steps that school staff can take to assist students at risk of dropping out. When combined with more comprehensive programs for students who have already dropped out of school, these actions can reduce the dropout rate in a demonstrable way.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of a high school diploma has changed dramatically over the last century as America's economy and workforce needs have changed. In 1900, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, just 6% of adults had graduated from high school.[1] By 1940, that number had increased to 25%, and the percentage of high school graduates rose steadily over the next several decades. But even through the 1970s, a high school diploma – though it opened doors to higher education and to higher paid occupations – was not an absolute necessity for a productive and even well paid life.[2]

Today, however, a high school diploma is considered a minimum requirement for most jobs and most forms of training, and those who have dropped out before receiving one are at a significant disadvantage. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. When they do find work, they tend to earn only about half as much as graduates do,[3] and often can't earn enough money to stay out of poverty.[4] Dropouts are more likely to become single parents and to have children at young ages. They are three times more likely than high school graduates to rely upon public assistance.[5] And they are more likely to be imprisoned,[6] currently making up about 30% of federal and 40% of state prison inmates.[7]

But how many of our young people succeed in graduating from high school? How many drop out along the way? And what can schools, districts, and state government do to help students stay in school and complete their education?

Washington State's Academic Achievement and Accountability (A+) Commission requested this report to explore those questions. The A+ Commission was established by the 1999 State Legislature to develop an accountability system for students, schools, and school districts in Washington State. Part of that accountability system is intended to include goals for high school graduation rates and for dropout reduction for students in grades seven through twelve. But the Commission cannot set meaningful goals until it has good information on current graduation and dropout rates and an understanding of how academic accountability systems can be tailored to provide incentives for high school graduation.

This report attempts to provide that information by summarizing:

- **Washington State graduation rates,** based on the authors' analysis of data collected by local school districts and submitted to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The report compares Washington State graduation rates with national rates and makes recommendations on data collection and calculation methods.

- **The role of dropout and graduation rates in states' academic accountability systems** based on a survey of the accountability systems of all 50 states. The report discusses policy issues related to different approaches to goals and accountability measures, as well as the experiences of various states in developing and implementing their systems.

- **Dropout prevention approaches,** including factors that lead students to drop out, the attributes of successful dropout prevention programs, and profiles of successful programs.

WASHINGTON'S GRADUATION RATE

An analysis of Washington State high school enrollment and graduation data by the authors of this report estimates that **Washington State's high school graduation rate is 70.1%**. That is, only 70.1% of all students who enroll in 9th grade in a Washington State public school (excluding those who transfer out of the state or to a private school) graduate from high school four years later. The remaining students – nearly one-third of all high school students – either drop out or take more than four years to complete their degree.

This rate, while shocking, corresponds with a Gates Foundation-funded study on Washington State graduation rates completed earlier this year, which estimated a 67% graduation rate for Washington State high school students.[8] It also corresponds with a recent national study of graduation rates that estimated a 1998 graduation rate of 71%,[9] and with a recent study by the State of Arizona that estimated a 71% graduation rate for that state.[10]

REPORTING GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES

The National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) and Education Departments in all 50 states generally approach the high school dropout problem by reporting dropout rates, measuring directly the number of students who drop out of school. However, reporting dropout rates can be fraught with complications: dropout rates can be calculated in a number of different ways that produce very different results, and the question of exactly which students should be considered dropouts can be difficult to resolve.

Because the dropout rate can be calculated in many different ways, dropout rates can be confusing and difficult to understand,[11] and can produce very different interpretations of a school or district's performance:

- **The event rate,** or annual rate, measures the proportion of students who leave school each year without completing. The event rate, which is the simplest dropout rate to calculate, is used by 41 states, including Washington State, as a primary dropout measure. However, many experts contend that the event rate understates the magnitude of the dropout problem because it does not track students throughout their entire high school career, but only provides information on a single year.[12]

- **The status rate** or population snapshot, measures the proportion of all young adults (generally those between 16 and 24) who do not have a high school degree. Because this rate is less specific to schools and districts, it is less often used, though background information about the overall population within a certain age group – that is, the people who should be in school or should have received a high school degree – is often used to provide a context for other types of dropout or graduation rates.

- **The cohort rate** or longitudinal rate, measures what happens to a cohort or single group of students over time, usually over four years from what would typically be their 9th through 12th grade years.[13] Calculating the cohort rate requires at least four consecutive years of data, something that is difficult for many schools and districts to obtain.

In addition, because the act of dropping out of school is not a distinct event but rather a process that occurs over months or years as a student gradually disengages from school, the question of which students should be considered dropouts can be difficult. Students may move in and out of

school or transfer between schools and programs, which can make accounting for them quite complicated. And students' paths after dropping out may also raise questions about how they should be defined. For instance, some states, including Washington State, define students who leave school but then return to receive a GED as dropouts.[14] Others count GED recipients as high school completers, and remove them from the dropout count. Still other states exempt certain dropouts – for instance, students who drop out after failing to pass a high school exit exam – from their dropout counts.

Because of these complications, a number of researchers have shifted their study of the high school dropout problem to easier-to-quantify variables – enrollment levels and graduation totals – and have begun calculating **completion** or **graduation** rates rather than dropout rates. These rates focus on the positive, a student's successful completion of high school, and approach the dropout rate in a cohort manner, as the inverse of the graduation rate.

Graduation and completion rates can be measured either by tracking individual students from the start of 7th or 9th grade through the end of what should be their 12th grade year, or, more generally, by examining overall enrollment levels in a state in one year and the graduation level four or six years later. Several states and the NCES calculate graduation or completion rates as one measure of student success in high school.

Washington State has historically calculated the graduation rate as the number of 12th graders who graduate by the end of that school year. This calculation results in a higher graduation rate – 80%[15] to 84%[16] -- than calculations that include the remainder of high school years (because many students who drop out do so in 9th, 10th, or 11th grade). To respond to concerns raised about this calculation method, the OSPI has also recently released a 9th-12th-grade graduation rate estimate of 71.9%.[17]

Because dropout rate calculations can be confusing and difficult to understand, the authors of this report use Washington State graduation rates – measured in cohort fashion both from the start of 7th grade and the start of 9th grade – for their analysis.

ANALYZING WASHINGTON'S GRADUATION RATE

The purpose of the data analysis conducted by the authors of this report was threefold:

- To provide a comprehensive picture of the educational outcomes of students in Washington State's public schools using several different methods of calculating outcomes.
- To assess the usability of the two primary sources for data about high school graduates and dropouts in Washington State.
- To suggest ways in which graduation and dropout data can be collected and reported so that dropout and graduation rates can be used to assess both the success of Washington State schools and the resources school will need to be successful.

DATA SOURCES. There are two primary sources of information on students in Washington State that are reasonably available and can be used by researchers to measure school outcomes in terms of graduates and dropouts. The first source consists of the **October counts** that are regularly taken at the beginning of the school year and widely publicized. These data are available for at least the past ten years and, although there are some inconsistencies across schools and years, the counts are generally reliable. The counts contain no individual level data, but can be used to follow the educational progress of different racial groups across schools,

districts and counties. When combined with the graduation data reported each year by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the October counts can also provide the basis for cohort trend analysis.

The second source of outcome data is the **Public Middle and High School Enrollment Status (P-210) Report.** This report is mandatory for all schools pursuant to RCW 28A.175.010 that requires school districts to account for the educational progress of all students in grades 9-12 served by the public school system. Unfortunately, the only complete database available as a result of this data collection effort is for the 2000-2001 school year. Individual level data are available, including race, gender, age, free-lunch status, and final disposition of the student (e.g., still in school, graduated, dropped out.) However, as already indicated, only one full year of data is available at this time.

COHORT GRADUATION RATES. A cohort graduation rate is calculated by looking at a single group of students as they progress through the educational system until the expected time of graduation. Some researchers recommend the use of the 7th grade as the base for such rates, and this is the direction the U. S. Department of Education and the Washington State Legislature appear to be favoring. However, many other researchers and the states they serve have used the 9th grade as the base for calculation of such rates. Both are used below to assess how several cohorts have fared over the past several years.

Figure 1 below displays the October enrollment counts and the June graduation counts for the entire state of Washington for six cohorts: the classes of 1999 to 2004. (Only 4-5 of the possible 7 data points are available for the classes of 2002 to 2004). The dotted line at the top of the graph indicates the approximate size of the population within each of the relevant age groups between 1993 and 2001. Thus, this graph shows how enrollment changed from year to year for the same group of students compared to the number of young people of that age in the state population.

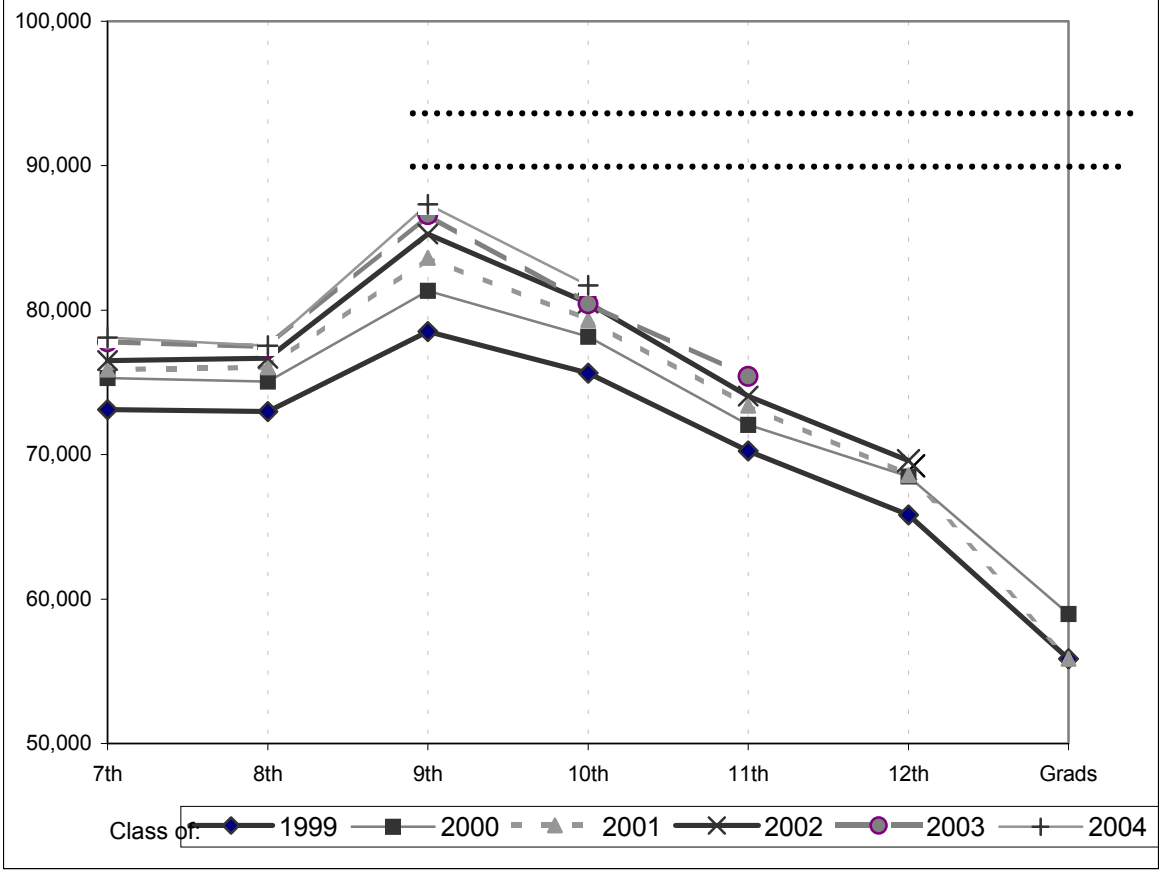
One trend is particularly striking and consistent: the 7th and 8th grade enrollments are approximately equal, but in each cohort this is followed by a significant (10-13%) increase in enrollment in the 9th grade. This increase is followed by a yearly drop in enrollment that accelerates from the 10th to the 12th grade. The actual number of graduates from each cohort is, again, significantly smaller than the 12th grade enrollment.

There is much that cannot be gleaned from the October count/graduation count databases because of the nature of the data, but the following should be noted:

- Because the data are for the entire state during this time period, the changes within the system are only “zero sum.” That is, transfers within or between districts are balanced and the only losses are to other systems (out of state, to private schools, or to home schooling) or outside the education system altogether.

- There was no significant change in the total population within each cohort for the ten years studied. (For example, the Class of 1999 total state cohort numbered approximately 85,490 in 1993 when they began 7th grade and 84,236 when they were scheduled to graduate from high school. The most recent graduating class for which we have data, 2001, numbered 91,495 in 1995 and 86,505 in 2001.) Changes in enrollments when taken across the entire state cannot be due to radical changes in the population.

Figure 1: For 6 cohorts of Washington State public school students, the pattern is the same: a spike in 9th grade; a decline to graduation 4 years later



- Shifts between private and public schools cannot account for a significant portion of the changes in public school enrollments. The October count taken in the private schools reveals that enrollment stayed relatively stable in the 7th and 8th grades across the period studied, but did fall in the 9th grade each year. However, the yearly net loss over the 10-year period averaged 710 students, accounting for less than 8% of the typical 8th-9th increase. There is no reliable information available on the number of home-schooled students likely to move into public high schools at the 9th grade each year, but it is unlikely to be substantially more than the number of private school students moving at that time.

- The statewide increase in the number of 9th graders each year is approximately 12%, but the change is significantly higher in some counties than in others. For example, over the past eight years six counties have averaged 8th-9th grade increases over 22% per year (Clallam, Thurston, Island, Chelan, Walla Walla and Franklin) while another five have experienced losses (Skamania, Columbia, Adams, Ferry and Lincoln.) The biggest counties exhibit quite different patterns: Skagit, Pierce, Yakima, and Spokane have all recorded increases over 16% each year, while King and Clark counties have seen increases well below the state mean of 12%. Clearly internal district policies and practices rather than state-

wide trends are at work here, but the October counts cannot provide the detail necessary to determine what these factors might be.

- It is clear that the bulk of the 8th-9th-grade spike cannot be explained from the available data. However, the individual-level data in the P210 files does provide some valuable information and this will be discussed in a later section of this report.

If a cohort's educational outcomes are compared to 7th grade enrollment as the baseline, the 9th grade spike may merely be a statistical artifact reflecting shifts in population among the cohorts (a subject that will be discussed in greater detail later in the report). However, the significant yearly jump in number of 9th graders could be a major problem if the 9th grade is used as the base for cohort rates. The Manhattan Institute's recent dropout report commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation dealt with the increase by averaging the enrollment of 8th, 9th and 10th grades. This approach has the virtue of not setting an artificially high baseline, but also smoothes away the loss of enrollment between the 9th and 10th grades, a particularly critical point in the educational process for high risk students.[18]

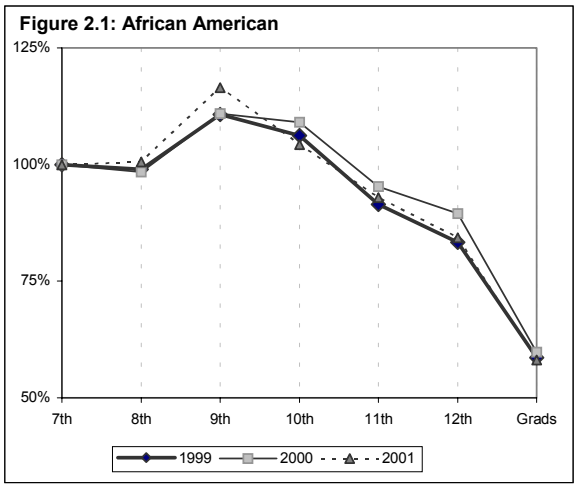
As indicated in the table below, using the 7th grade cohort enrollment, the actual 9th grade enrollment, and the 8th-9th-10th averaged enrollment yield very different cohort graduation rates. The variance is even greater when the state is broken for study into counties or districts. In other words, depending on your base (7th, 9th, 12th or a smoothed average), the graduation rate in the state could vary from between 70% and 84%. Again, the spread is even greater when districts and counties are looked at individually.

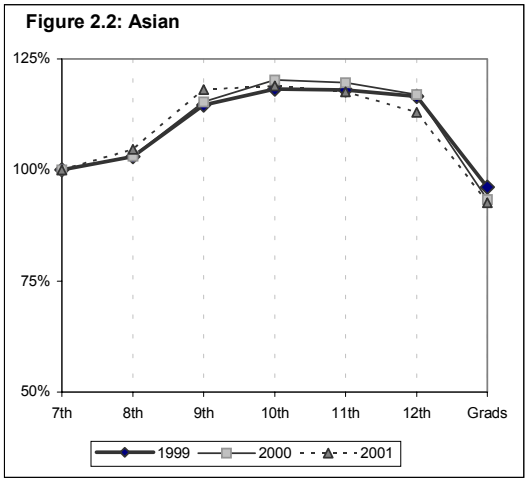
Table 1: Comparison of graduation rates with different bases

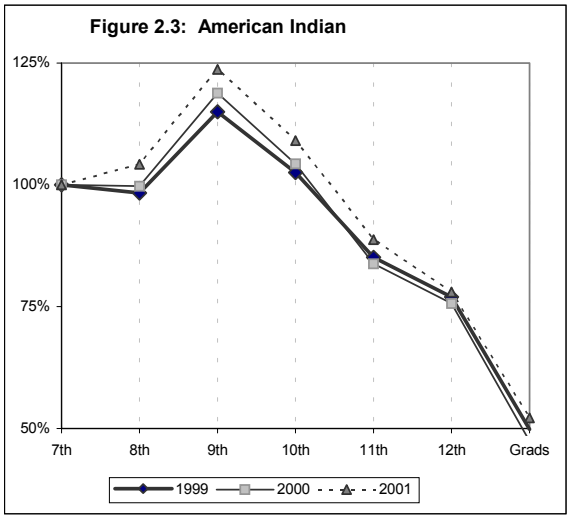
Between Grades:	Average % Change	Graduation Rate
7th-8th	-0.1%	
8th-9th	12.2%	
9th-10th	-5.3%	
10th-11th	-7.3%	
12th-12th	-6.0%	
12th-graduation	**-15.9%**	**84.1%**
7th-graduation	**-23.9%**	**76.1%**
9th-graduation	**-29.9%**	**70.1%**
8-9-10 – graduation	**-26.9%**	**73.1%**

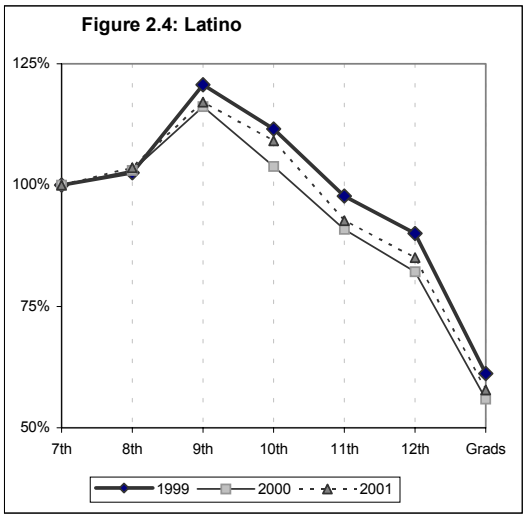
COHORT GRADUATION RATES BY RACE. The October counts/graduation counts can be broken out by race and by cohort to provide a picture of how different groups of students fare in the state's public education system. The figures below show percentage of the original 7th grade class of the cohort who enrolled in the subsequent school years. Thus, 7th grade enrollment is considered to be 100% for all races, while the 9th grade enrollment (because of the increase in enrollment described above) ranges from 5% to 23% above the 7th grade enrollment.

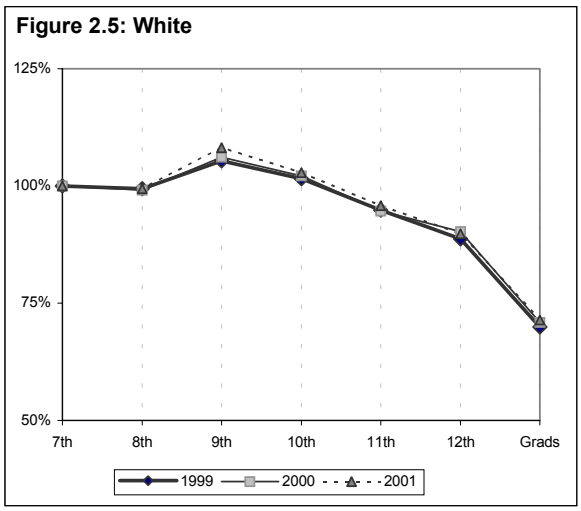
By standardizing the base to 100, these figures provide a graphic picture of the fortunes of different groups of students within the state school system. Because three different cohorts are followed through their academic years from 7th to 12th grade and graduation, it is also less likely that random fluctuations will affect the trends.











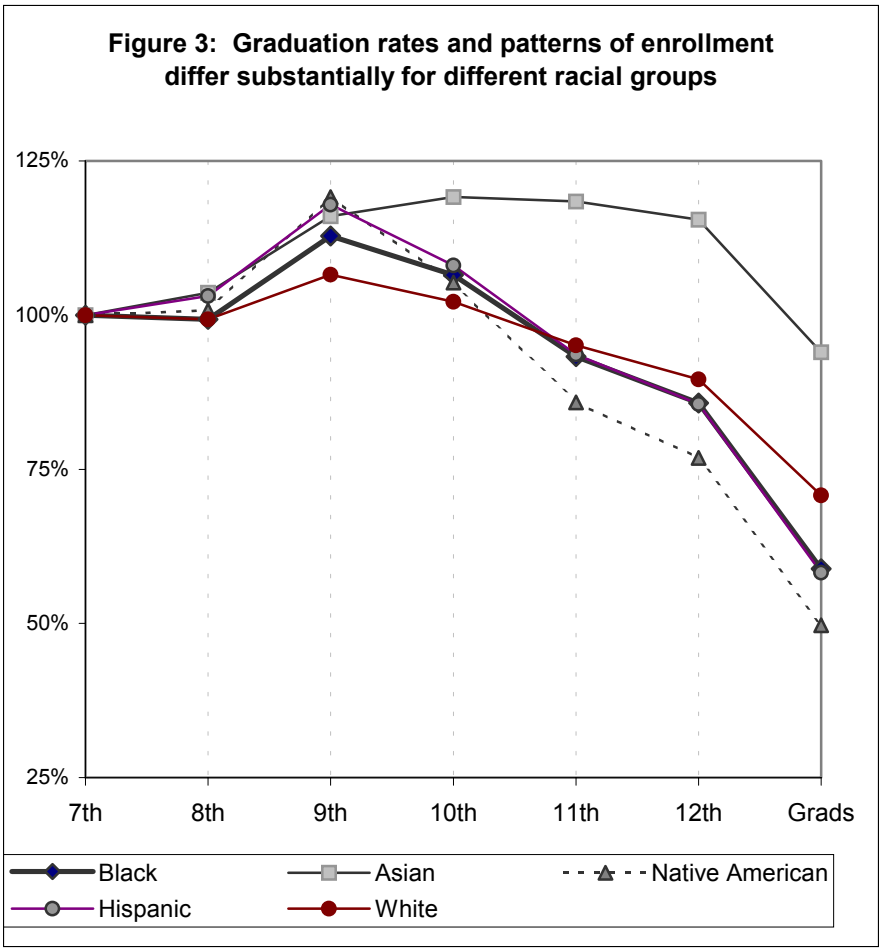
The story told by Figures 2.1 to 2.5 l is stark: Asian and white students, on the whole, are much more likely to stay in school and graduate than are African American, American Indian or Latino students. The pattern of the 8th-9th grade spike is seen in all racial groups, but is exaggerated for American Indian and Latino students, supporting the hypothesis that retentions may account for a

substantial portion of the 8-9th grade increase. Another interesting aspect of the racial/ethnic differences is the increase in Asian students for all three cohorts until the 12th grade.

Asian/Pacific Islanders were the fastest growing racial group in Washington State between 1990 and 2000, with an increase of 78% across the state. This may account for some of the increase in this population. However, the Latino population grew by 106% during these same years, and there is no comparable increase in Latino students. There is no indication in the data that there was an influx in Asian students from the private schools, so it is difficult to know what could account for this pattern of enrollment.

Figure 3 provides a comparison of the trajectories of the five different racial groups averaged across the 1999, 2000 and 2001 cohorts. The patterns are even clearer here: all racial groups experienced an influx of students in the 9th grade, followed by decreases in following years among all groups but Asians. Latino students have a higher peak in 9th grade than African American students, but then lose proportionally more students and end with a pattern of loss that exactly mirrors that of African American students. American Indian students have the lowest graduation rate (49.7% on average over 3 cohorts), followed by Latino (58.2%) and African American students (58.8%). Just over 70% of white students in the three cohorts graduated, while the percentage was 94% for Asian students because of the increase in their numbers from 7th to 11th grades.

Figure 3: Graduation rates and patterns of enrollment differ substantially for different racial groups



ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES. The cohort method of analyzing and reporting graduation rates is probably the most intuitively satisfying approach. As Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute has illustrated, the data resulting from such analyses tend to be

straightforward, stark, and simple to understand. The advantages of cohort graduation rates calculated from October counts and graduation figures include:

- October count data have been kept, and published, annually for many years. Schools have well-developed methods for collecting the data and there are few questions about who is to be counted. No controversial definitions are involved and schools have an incentive to count accurately since their funding depends on their enrollment.

- Cohort data can be compared year to year and can be easily measured against a reference group (such as the population of a given age group as reported by the US Census) to determine what proportion of the available students are in school. There is a satisfying flow from year to year and the public can easily understand the concept of the Class of 2000 growing, changing and decreasing as it progresses through the years of schooling, without recourse to variable rates or weighted averages as is done with status dropout reports.

- Many states and districts use the cohort reporting method and it is easily presented in graphic form, allowing for comparison of year-to-year data following the same group of students.

The disadvantages of the cohort reporting method lie in the data, rather than in the methodology itself:

- The October counts provide no information beyond race to those observing changes over time. It is impossible to tell from the data whether there are changes in the age mix of the classes or how the demographics of a cohort, a school or a district may have changed except in the broadest possible terms. Such uncomplicated data can be used to compile initial statistics, but are not adequate to help school administrators or policy makers determine what might be happening within a cohort.

- Because enrollments tend to be highest at the beginning of the school year and because many transfers can take place over the course of a year, the enrollment rates in a given school may shift radically from year to year. Using a single number (total enrollment) to characterize and assess a school's success in retaining its students would be highly problematic.

In short, the cohort method of tracking graduation rates has great potential for alerting the public and policy makers of the real situation in the schools: the possible stability of enrollments through 8th grade, followed by a (possibly) artificial spike that is, in turn, followed for most groups of students by a sharp decrease in the number of students in a given cohort who enroll in the schools the following year. Some of these students no doubt graduate early (and are counted with an earlier cohort) or stay in school to graduate later (and are counted with a later cohort), but it is only reasonable to assume that the 25-50% of some subgroups of students who are not with their cohorts when they begin 12th grade are probably not either in school or using their high school diploma in the workplace. They have most likely left school without a diploma and will be subject to all of the limitations that go with that status.

GRADE LEVEL STATUS REPORTS. Cohort graduation rates provide a moving picture of progress through the educational system. Grade level status reports, by comparison, provide a snapshot of all relevant grade levels or classes at a point in time, but cannot easily or reliably be used to calculate graduation or dropout rates.

Such a detailed snapshot is possible with the availability of the P210 data: individual level information on every student enrolled in a public high school in Washington State in the 2000-2001 school year. The plan is for such an information base to be accumulated every school year, eventually providing the basis for trend analysis. At the present time, however, only one year of data is available from which to calculate the educational status of students—whether they are still in school, progressing normally towards graduation, transferred outside the system, dropped out or received a diploma, GED or adult diploma.

Unfortunately, the P210 database is still incomplete and inconsistent; the "clean" version available in late July 2002 had over 35,000 duplicate records, with additional thousands of students unable to be checked for duplication because of errors in data entry. There were hundreds of cases where the same student was claimed as a graduate by two or more schools while at the same time being listed as still enrolled or dropped out from another school in the same district. These are normal problems with a new data collection system, but the complexity of the task emphasizes the difficulty any organization will have in getting data accurate and comprehensive enough to be used as the basis for an accountability system.

The P210 file, though not perfect, however, can provide extremely valuable information on what happens to various kinds of students as they pursue their high school education. The first thing it can provide is a relatively detailed picture of the makeup of each class/grade level across the state, something not possible with the October counts. One problem here (and pointing up one of the problems with a new data collection effort) is the fact that cohort/graduation year and grade level were inconsistently recorded across schools. Some schools clearly adjusted the graduating class (cohort) of the student to reflect their current grade level (thus, a student originally in the Class of 2001 who was retained in the 10th grade would be reassigned a 2002 or 2003 graduation date) while others kept the graduating class the same, independent of the progress of the student toward that date. In the following discussion, grade level rather than cohort/graduating class is used as the basic organizing device.

The October count data could not provide an adequate description of the 8th-9th grade spike because of the lack of individual-level data. The P210 data begin with 9th graders, but the demographics of this class can provide some insight into what happens at the usual transition between junior high/middle school and high school. It does appear that retentions in the 9th grade account for many of the "new" students in that class year, although this is clearly not the complete answer. Table 2 below provides a summary of the components that go to make up the increase.

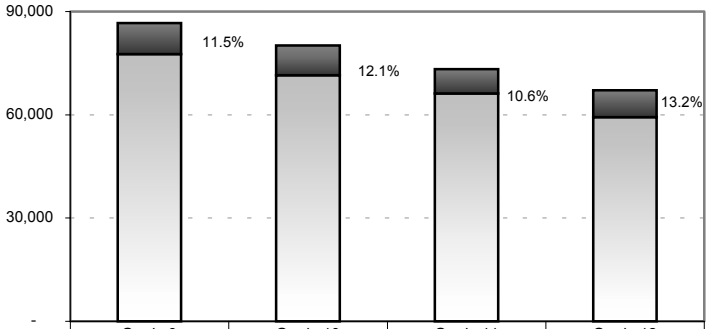
Table 2: Components of Increase in 9th Grade Enrollment

8th-9th grade increase	*Source of data*	*Number*	*Percent*
Net public gain (Class of 2004)	P210, October count	9,780	100%
Net gain from private schools	Private October count	708	7.2%
Students 2+ years over age	P210	6,371	64.5%
Gain unaccounted for		2,764	28.3%

Clearly, retention of students (as indicated by the number of older students and/or students with graduating classes earlier than 2004) is substantial, amounting to almost two-thirds of the increase. It must be noted that this is quite likely an overestimate of the importance of retention since at least some of these students would have been retained in earlier grades and have progressed into 9th grade with their "new" cohort. Also, as Figure 4 reveals, approximately the same proportion of each, increasingly smaller, class is made up of overage students. Without

trend data on the same students, it is impossible to know how many times a student may have been retained, but it appears that at least some continue in school towards graduation. It is equally likely, however, that there may be rolling retentions; i.e., each year a new group of students is retained.

Figure 4: The percentage of overage students is fairly stable by grade level; most students (87-91%) are the right age and have the appropriate graduation year



	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Other age/year	8,941	8,678	7,040	7,839
Grad year & age appropriate	77,679	71,508	66,240	59,274

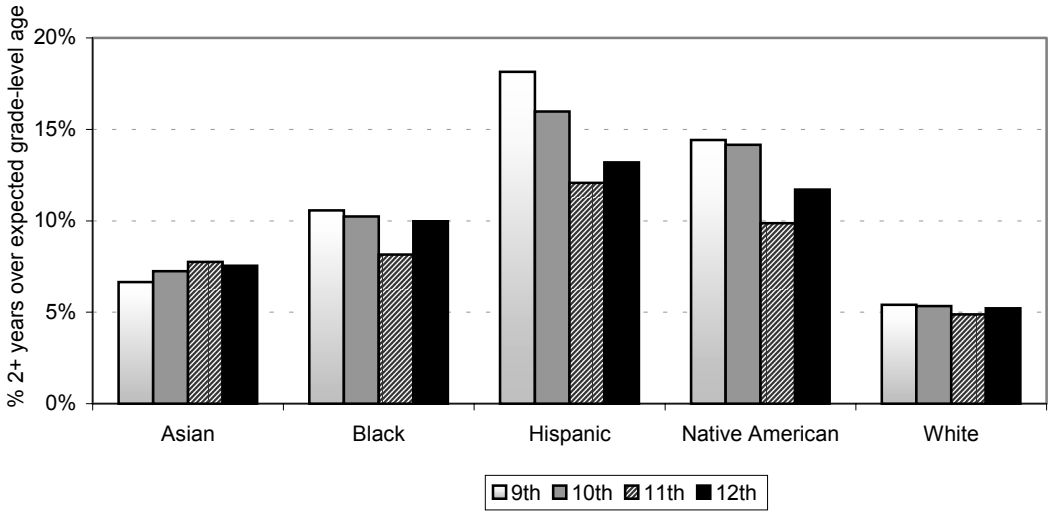
Retention in school has been a controversial subject for many years, pitting those who condemn social promotion as dooming students to failure against those who point out the extremely high dropout rates among students who have been previously retained in a grade. As is clear in Figure 4, the percent of students over age doesn't change much class to class, but analysis of the outcomes (graduation/still in school/dropping out) of 9th to 12th graders in the P210 file revealed that students two or more years older than their peers (for 12th graders, this was computed as 20 or older at the beginning of 12th grade) dropped out of school at a rate 5 to 10 times higher than students who were of expected age for their grade.[19]

Table 3: Dropout rate of 9th to 12th graders at the end of the 2000-2001 school year

2000-01 School Year	Right Age	2+ Years Older
9th grade	1.7%	22.3%
10th grade	2.1%	23.7%
11th grade	2.8%	25.4%
12th grade	5.7%	25.7%

Latino and American Indian students are significantly more likely to be overage than students of other racial groups. This is unquestionably connected to the higher dropout rates among those populations. Figure 5 shows the percentage of each racial/ethnic group that is overage at each grade level. The rapid drop in the percentage of Latino and American Indian students over age reflects the loss of this population as the school years continue.

Figure 5: Latino and American Indian students are much more likely to be 2+ years over age at every grade level than are white, Asian and African American students



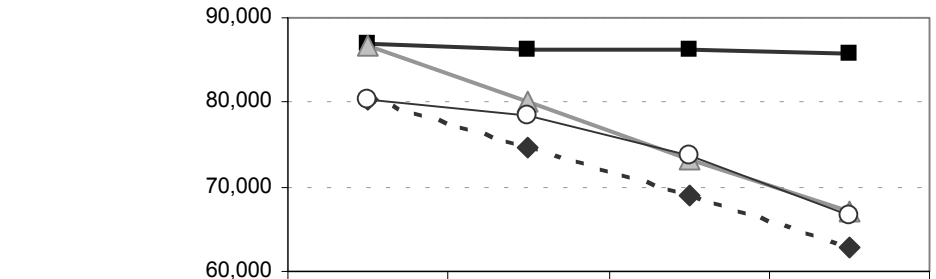
While the P210 database provides a great deal of information on the status of students, it cannot provide the trend data so important to assessing progress toward keeping all students in school until graduation. The snapshot of the P210 file does, however, allow us to look at enrollments at the beginning of the school year and get an idea of what is happening year to year.

Figure 6 provides a reference line showing the number of young people in the given age group in the general population, confirming that there was no change in the general high-school age population over the period in question. Even with from 10-13% of each year's enrollment outside the typical age group, it is clear that every class captures a smaller proportion of the "market;" as high school years roll on, there are fewer and fewer students in the seats.

In addition to showing the US Census cohort parameters, Figure 6 provides an indication of the differences in numbers of students per class depending on the different definitions used: the class assignment (Grade 9, 10, 11 or 12) in the file, the age of the student, and the cohort to which the student was assigned (Class of 2001, etc.). There are clear differences, with the age line reflecting the number of overage students in a class and the "graduation year" line reflecting the fact that graduation year is most often assigned in the 9th grade and, in most schools, kept constant even if the student is retained in a grade.

Whatever the differences, however, the downward trend is clear. After three years of high school, approximately 78-80% of the initial pool of students enroll for their 12th year, and both the graduation reports and the P210 data indicate that about 80-84% of seniors receive a diploma. According to both methods and sources for assessing educational outcomes, only about 68% of the students who enroll as 9th graders in any given year actually receive diplomas four years later. Including or excluding a particular group of students (such as those receiving GEDs from other educational institutions or those who transfer outside the state) may change these percentages by a point or two, but the trend is clear. A distressingly large proportion of the young people in Washington State do not stay in school to receive their high school diplomas, and the problem is particularly critical for American Indian, Latino and African American youth.

Figure 6: Depending on definition of class membership in 2000-2001, numbers in each class differ--but the percent decrease is much the same from 9th to 12th grade

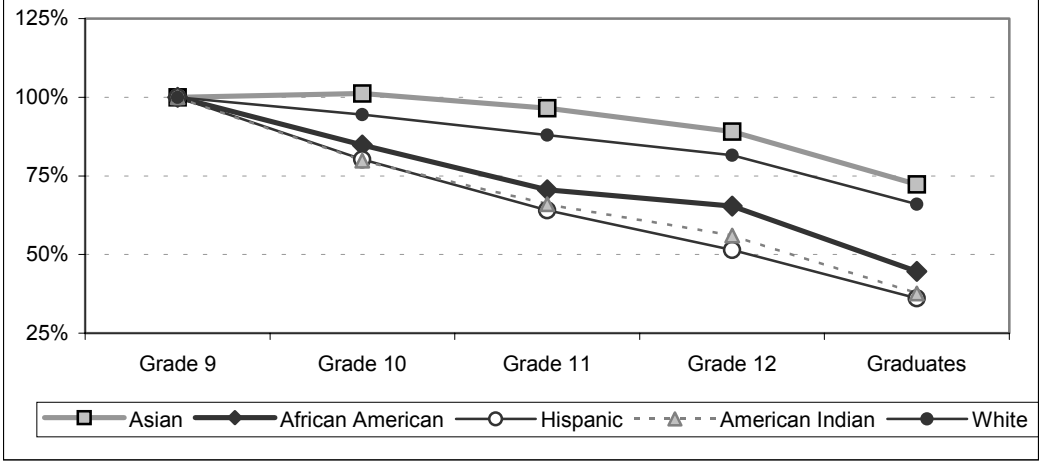


	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
US Census (age appropriate)	86,844	86,143	86,177	85,723
P210 class assignment	86,620	80,186	73,280	67,113
By age	80,290	74,683	68,940	62,894
By graduation year	80,233	78,315	73,789	66,657

As with the October count data, the P210 data provide valuable information on the educational outcomes for minority students. Enrollment by race and by grade is shown in Figure 7. The same pattern is seen here as before, although the numbers are somewhat different because of the different data sources. The cohort finding of Asian increase after the 9th grade is seen in the P210 data as well, while American Indian and Latino re-enrollment rates are lower in the P210 data than in the October count cohort data.

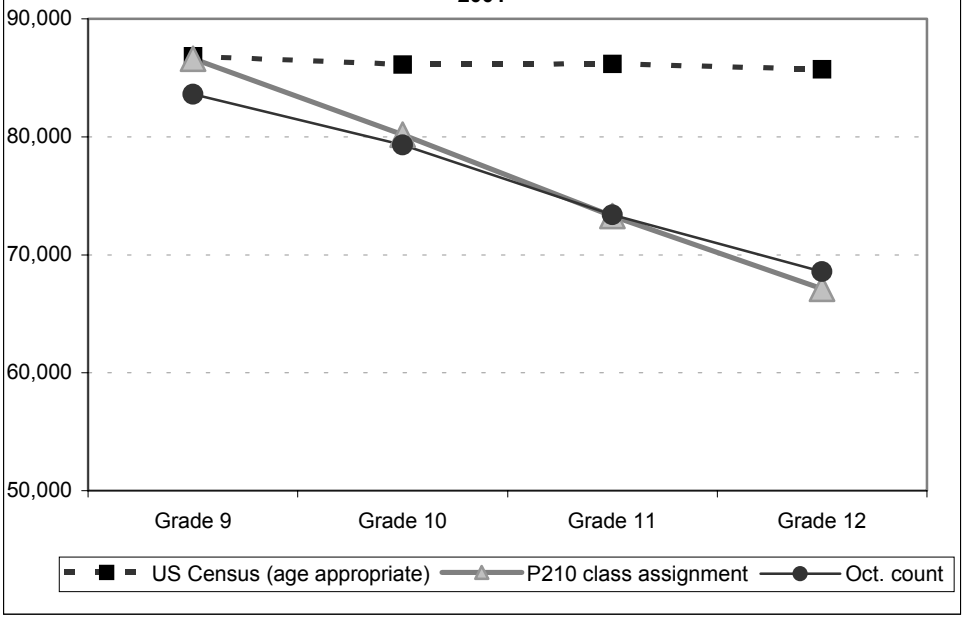
Some differences are also evident: looking across classes, the pattern is set by the beginning of the 10th grade: high re-enrollment for Asian and white students, while African American, Latino and American Indian students drop off about equally at that time. After that, the drop is more rapid for Latino and American Indian students than for African American students. Looking simply across the classes and at rates of enrollment and graduation, the projections for minority students appear to be very dire.

Figure 7: The P210 data tell a familiar story: Latino, American Indian and African American students have much lower re-enrollment rates in school than Asians and whites



It is clear from the data broken out by race that the similarities are greater than the differences when we use the different approaches and data sources on a statewide basis. This is confirmed by comparing the trend line for the October count data to the P210 data. Although the October counts and the P210 data examine different populations (a cohort over four years versus a snapshot of four grade levels in a single school year) the resulting profiles are almost identical. There is a strong and persistent loss of students through the four years of high school, with minority students making up a disproportionate share of those who do not complete their high school years.

Figure 7: Comparison of P210 and October count date for the Class of 2001



ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES. Like the October count data, the P210 data can be used to provide enrollment, graduation and dropout rates down to the school level. However, as was noted above, the P210 data have both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are particularly appealing to a researcher interested in the links between individual characteristics, school behavior and community demographics. Specific advantages are that:

- The P210 data are detailed and at an individual level. It is possible to examine interactions between student race, age, gender, and other academic characteristics.
- The data could potentially be linked to WASL and ITBS data, permitting state planners and policymakers to tailor programs and policies to assist in both narrowing the achievement and the graduation gap.
- Data collection is mandated and the directions have been clarified and are being modified in light of the experience of schools and districts in the initial years of data collection.

The disadvantages of the P210 data are, like its advantages, related to both the source and the nature of the data:

- Now, and in the immediate future, the P210 data is likely to be extremely "dirty," requiring anyone working with it to spend excessive time trying to discover the

status of many of the students in the database. Schools with vastly different levels of staffing, computer sophistication and commitment to the process are all feeding into the database, providing information that might reflect less on the fortunes of their students than on the vigilance of the data entry person.

- There is currently no provision for a unique student identifier, although the P210 instructions request that schools provide one. Without such an identifier, it is inevitable that students will be lost to the system, or show up multiple times, because names or birth dates are a digit off or differently configured (in one school district, a district-specific code was added to each name, making it impossible to match names across schools and districts without significant recoding.)

- Because of the complexity and newness of the data collection effort, it took well over a year to produce an inadequate copy of the database for use by outside researchers. Even with efficiencies introduced over time, it is unlikely that trend data will be available on a timely basis for at least four years. Any analysis will have to be done via snapshot.

All of the analysis prepared for this report has been on a statewide basis. This was intentional. Although the intention of this research was to identify sources and methods for tracking school progress, whatever method is chosen must be readily useable at all levels: school, district, county and state. Right now, analysis of cohort data by district or school is relatively easy to do, and has the virtue of simplicity and a "one-stop" checkpoint. The only thing that is important are the number of students who show up each fall and the number receiving diplomas in the course of the year. The tremendous "noise" in the average student, school or district life is completely obscured in the October count/graduation count data, but shows up clearly in the P210 data: the transfers among schools and between districts as students seek the best fit; the temporary suspensions or the think-again dropout; the students who are enrolled in two or more programs and thus coded as belonging to each; the students moving from home-school to public school and back again. These data don't make for clean graphs, but they do provide insight into what schools and districts must deal with when attempting to increase the retention of their students—especially their high-risk students—in school until graduation. Preliminary analysis on the Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Lake Washington, and Yakima school districts is included in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

The authors' analysis of the statewide October count, graduation count, and P210 data lead to three recommendations for data collection and reporting:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Assign a unique identifier to every student as s/he begins school.

As the discussion above noted, analysis of the P210 database was made more difficult by the fact that many student records were duplicated. This problem could be alleviated through the use of unique student identifiers.

A recent survey by the authors of this report of all 50 state Departments of Education revealed that 25 states, or 50%, have implemented individual student identifiers (although in some of these states not all districts yet use the system). A number of other states report that they are in the process of developing the software and programs needed to implement unique identifiers in response to the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The Washington State P210 database is intended to be used with unique student identifiers – most likely Social Security numbers – but these have not yet been incorporated into the system.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Report all graduation, enrollment, and dropout data on a cohort basis, using 7th grade enrollment as the baseline, and use a cohort-based graduation rate as the primary measure of school and district success at helping students stay in school until graduation.

Dropping out of school is generally thought of as a high school problem, and, indeed, relatively few students drop out of school during grades 7 and 8.[20] However, researchers have found that the earlier a student drops out of school, the less likely it is that the student will later return to complete high school or receive a GED certificate.[21]

To identify these students as early as possible and to ensure that the data set on school dropouts contains all students who have dropped out a number of states collect dropout information from middle school in addition to high school. A recent survey of all 50 state Departments of Education revealed that 31 states, or 61%, collect dropout information from grades 7 through 12. The Federal ESEA will soon require reporting beginning at the 7th grade. Washington State law permits for dropout reduction and graduation rate goals for students in grades 7 through 12, though most analysis of Washington state data is on grades 9 through 12.

The data analysis earlier in this report noted an unexplained increase in enrollment between 8th and 9th grades. Continued data collection and analysis beginning in 7th grade will help explore and explain this increase as well as provide a good baseline for the analysis of student success in high school.

In terms of the rate that is presented as the key indicator of student success in completing high school, dropout rate calculations in Washington state and elsewhere around the country are complicated by the fact that dropping out is not a distinct – or, often, even a final – act. Students may drop out gradually, or transfer in and out of several schools or programs while in the process of dropping out. As a result, the status of many students is unknown, and the determination of what constitutes a dropout can be confusing.

Although dropout rate calculations will still be helpful as supplementary information, and will be required by the federal government, state policymakers should focus their attention around **graduation** rates derived from enrollment and graduation data. These rates, which can track the status of student cohort groups over time, provide a clear measure of student success, a measure based on clear and easily obtainable data.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Devote enough resources to the development of the P210 database to make it a usable resource for trend analysis within the next three years.

The discussion earlier in this report noted the inaccuracies and difficulties inherent in the P210 database. These problems are not at all unusual for a new data collection system, and, in fact, have been experienced by school and district administrators in a number of other states.

But as administrators in other states pointed out during interviews conducted by the authors earlier this year, helping schools and districts to collect and record accurate data is the first step toward understanding and then solving the dropout problem. In Indiana, for instance, the state director of performance-based accreditation, noted that the assistance the state provided to individual schools some years ago in keeping better records proved invaluable in helping schools keep closer account of individual students.[22]

Washington state can learn from these lessons by continuing to fund the development of the P210 database, by providing support to data entry staff, and by providing data to authorized outside researchers on a timely basis so that these researchers can inform district and state policymakers.

HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

LINKING DROPOUT RATES WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

The move to tougher academic standards – with schools held ever more accountable for student performance – has been intended to help students achieve at the levels demanded by the 21st century. But could the standards movement result in unexpected side effects? Although it is too soon to tell, many researchers and policymakers are concerned that higher standards and difficult assessment exams may encourage low-performing and disadvantaged students to drop out[23] or, alternatively, pressure teachers and administrators to tolerate a higher level of dropouts in return for higher test scores.[24]

This effect, researchers fear, could be particularly pronounced among older students, who may drop out late in high school after failing the final test required for a diploma.[25] In fact, researchers have even coined a new term, "push-outs," to describe 16- and 17-year old students who leave school because they fear they will not pass a required exam.[26]

The concern that high-stakes testing and tougher assessment measures could contribute to higher dropout rates has led Education Departments in many states to incorporate dropout and graduation rate measures into their accountability systems alongside assessment measures. The authors of this report conducted a detailed survey of the educational accountability systems of all 50 states, combining literature and Internet review with e-mail and phone interviews to learn what other states have done and how their efforts have affected their dropout and graduation rates.

The survey found a wide range in the way states report and measure dropout and graduation rates, and grouped states into three categories based on this variability:

- **CATEGORY 1: Dropout and graduation rates are not reported in the state's accountability system.** In these states, dropout and/or graduation rates may be published separately, but the rates are not reported in the state's accountability system.

- **CATEGORY 2: Dropout rates are reported in the accountability system, but evaluative goals or measures for improvement have not been established.** In these states, dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in the accountability system, and there is a clear state expectation for improvement in these rates in general. However, in these states, there are no evaluative measures or goals established to direct schools or districts.

- **CATEGORY 3: Dropout rates are reported and evaluated in the accountability system.** In these states, dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in the accountability system, and are explicitly evaluated either by (a) comparisons with state median rates or with similar schools; or (b) absolute goals such as specific percentage targets.

The survey found that 24 states, or just under half, do not report dropout or graduation rates in their accountability systems, but rather focus their accountability systems around student performance. Washington State is included in this category, although the A+ Commission was recently given goal-setting authority in the area of dropout and graduation rates by the state Legislature.

Another 13 states report dropout or completion rates in their accountability systems, but have not set evaluative criteria by which those rates are assessed.

The final 13 states evaluate dropout or graduation rates either by comparison with other schools or districts or by progress toward a specific goal. (Please note that the accountability systems in many states are currently being developed and refined; thus, the number of states in each category will change over time, and the overall results summarized in this report should be understood as representing a snapshot in time.) The table below provides a summary of state accountability systems.

Inclusion of Dropout/Graduation Rates in Accountability Systems

Category	No. States	% Total
Category 1: Rates not reported	24	48%
Category 2: Rates reported but not evaluated	13	26%
Category 3: Rates reported and evaluated	13	26%
TOTAL	**50**	**100%**

A summary of states' accountability systems, data collection, and dropout reporting methods can be found in Appendix B.

CATEGORY 1: RATES NOT REPORTED IN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Twenty-four state Departments of Education do not explicitly report dropout or graduation rates in their accountability systems. In most cases, the accountability systems in these states focus around assessment results or other measures of student performance or teacher credentials. These states do not necessarily ignore dropout and graduation rates simply because they are not reported in their accountability systems, however. All of these states collect and publish information about dropouts and graduates and most include summaries of dropout or graduation rates in their school or district report cards. However, these states do not make an explicit connection between dropout or graduation rates and their accountability systems.

- In **Washington**, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction reports dropout and graduation rates in a separate publication but not in the accountability system, which focuses on student performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning exams. However, ESB 6456, adopted by the state Legislature in 2002, provided the A+ Commission with the authority to establish school and school district goals addressing high school graduation rates and dropout reduction goals for students in grades seven through twelve.

- In **Delaware**, the Department of Education uses a State Student Identifier and publishes event dropout rates for grades 9 through 12 each year. However, its accountability system is focused around the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP).

- In **Illinois,** the Better Schools Accountability Law of 1985 led to the development of the Illinois Learning Standards of 1997. These are measured largely through student performance on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Dropout rates are published on each school's report card, but are not reported in the accountability system.

- In **Pennsylvania,** the School Performance Funding (SPF) program is based on both the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and attendance rates, though not dropout rates. Schools are awarded money based on their performance compared with their own performance the previous year. The dropout rate is not reported in this system, though it is reported on school profile report cards.

CATEGORY 2: REPORTED BUT NOT EVALUATED BY ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The Council of Chief State School Officers issued a report earlier this year on the design and function of educational accountability systems. That report identified four primary purposes for an accountability system:

- To **identify** and promote improved educational practices and results;
- To **inform stakeholders** of the condition of education at the school, district, and state levels and to identify areas in which improvement is needed and success is being achieved;
- To **obtain** the support of all stakeholders in making the changes needed to enable all students to achieve at high levels; and/or
- To **inform policy decisions** and actions by officials at the local, state, and federal levels, parents, students, members of the community, and other interested individuals to improve academic performance where needed and to reward it where appropriate.[27]

It is this second goal, informing stakeholders, that is the focus in the 13 states that report dropout or graduation rates in their accountability systems but do not evaluate these rates against specific goals. Instead, the goal of including dropout rates in the accountability system is to make the dropout problem more visible to parents, policymakers, and school administrators.

Thus, even though dropout rate goals might not be explicitly set or used to compare schools or districts with each other, these states have made it clear that reducing dropout rates (and increasing graduation rates) is a key part of school performance. These states typically provide some type of highly visible, often customizable, dropout or completion report or dataset that stakeholders can use to examine an individual school or district's performance in this area.

- In **California**, for instance, the state's Public School Accountability Act of 1999 resulted in the Academic Performance Index (API), which provides a numerical score for each school based on students' testing performance. Targets are set for schools based, in part, on the school's performance relative to similar schools. Dropout or graduation rates are not part of the API, but are reported in the accountability system and are available as part of the state's Data Quest system. Data Quest allows stakeholders to obtain via the Internet a series of reports with statewide and county data on event and cohort dropout rates.
- In **Minnesota,** the state's "Choices for Change" report outlining its accountability system reports on dropout and graduation rates, but does not include them among the list of measures by which schools will be evaluated. Student performance measures focus primarily on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA).

- In **Utah,** the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS) consists primarily of a set of assessments. In addition, schools are required as part of the U-PASS to produce a written report that includes the dropout rate among other information. The dropout rate is not evaluated, however, but merely published as part of the school's report.

CATEGORY 3: REPORTED AND EVALUATED BY ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The third category in the survey consists of 13 states that report dropout or graduation rates in their accountability systems and then evaluate the rates. These states are fairly evenly divided between 6 states that evaluate dropout rates by comparing an individual school or district's dropout rate with the state median or with a group of similar schools (typically based on socioeconomic factors); and 7 states that evaluate dropout rates through specific numeric goals by which schools and districts are measured.

Officials at the state Departments of Education who were interviewed in several of these states did not claim that evaluating school or district dropout rates within an accountability system would necessarily have a direct causal effect on the dropout rate. Rather, they noted that publicizing the dropout rate and setting evaluative measures (by comparing school or district rates with other schools or districts or by setting absolute goals for dropout rate reduction) 'raised the stakes' on the issue and made the issue of dropping out more visible to parents, policymakers, and the public and therefore more important in the public discourse about the quality of education.

Several of those interviewed went on to note, however, that the evaluation of dropout and graduation rates in an accountability system has sometimes had the less than desirable outcome of inspiring schools or districts to try to find ways – through data collection or calculation methodologies – to make their dropout rates appear to be declining, even if they are actually not. (This phenomenon has been mostly widely publicized in Texas,[28] but has also been documented in Los Angeles,[29] and was specifically mentioned as a problem by an administrator in Indiana, who noted that since that state's accountability system was implemented schools have begun reclassifying dropouts as home-schoolers.[30]) In other states, districts have pressured state Departments of Education to change the dropout definition so as to limit the number of students classified as dropouts. (This has happened in Texas, as the state has allowed schools to omit students who drop out after failing their exit exam from the dropout count,[31] and was also mentioned by an official in New Mexico, who noted that schools can now rely on a parent's affidavit that a student is transferring to a different school rather than waiting for the new school to make an official transcript request, thus verifying that the student has indeed transferred.[32])

- **Connecticut** has chosen an accountability system that has 'no carrots and no sticks.' The State Department of Education has identified 20 low-performing districts and tries to direct grants and resources to those districts, but in general does not provide either sanctions or rewards for districts that perform well or poorly on assessment exams or other measures such as dropout rate. However, the state does keep careful track of a number of measures for each school district in the state, and publishes them each year in a School Profile, which outlines the relevant measures for each district. These measures include the status dropout rate, that is, the number of adults in each school district area who do not have a high school degree; the event, or annual, dropout rate; and the cohort, or 4-year dropout rate. Both event and cohort dropout rates are evaluated not only against the average rate for the entire state but also against an Education Reference Group (ERG) composed of school districts with similar socioeconomic characteristics. In this way, parents, teachers, and policymakers can easily see how a given school district compares with the state as a whole as well as with similar districts. (Staff in Connecticut note that the state has

considered moving to a school-by-school profile, rather than a district-based report, but has found that too complicated at this point). Connecticut has found that publishing measures in its School Profiles has led districts to take action on a number of fronts over the years to improve their rates and their relationship to the other districts with which they are grouped within ERGs, but does not have any information to prove that this work has caused dropout rates to decline.[33]

- **Indiana** reports a graduation rate (which is derived through a slightly different methodology than the one described above) as a secondary indicator as part of its school accreditation process. Indiana officials note that reporting graduation rates and comparing schools with each other and with the state median hasn't made a significant difference in the graduation rate. However, the help the state gave to individual districts about ten years ago in cleaning up their data made a great deal of difference and showed marked improvement as schools did a better job following up with students who had dropped out or were truant. Since then, though, state officials report that many schools 'play the game,' reclassifying dropouts as home-schooled students so as to keep the dropout rate low. The response to that problem has been the state's accreditation system, which requires site visits from state officials every three years. 'That's where the power is,' according to the state's accreditation director. The accreditation system is still in transition so the exact method by which graduation rates will be incorporated into the system has not yet been determined. For now, they are secondary rates, used to raise a school's ranking level (which is mostly determined by assessments in math and language arts) but not to lower a school's ranking.[34]

- **New Mexico** doesn't simply compare schools with each other, it sets specific standards for the dropout rate. The state's Accountability Program for Schools includes an Accountability Data System that uses student Social Security numbers. Event dropout rates are evaluated in this system with scores for schools: 1% or less = exemplary; 1.1 – 4.0% = exceeds standards; 4.1 – 7.0% = meets standards; and 7.0% or greater = probationary. (For middle school, probationary status = greater than 2.5%.) According to reports published by the New Mexico State Department of Education, dropout rates in New Mexico have fluctuated since the mid 1980s, but in recent years have remained well below the 10.4% high recorded in 1988-90. By 1999, according to a recent dropout report, New Mexico schools' annual (event) dropout rate had dropped to 6%, its lowest point since 1986. However, according to staff, they cannot claim that the accountability system is responsible for this decline. Part of the credit goes to a change in the dropout definition that allows schools to accept a parent's affidavit that a student is transferring rather than dropping out rather than waiting for an official transcript request from the new school. And part of this decline has resulted from more careful data collection by schools and districts, since they know they will be held accountable for the results: for instance, staff noted, some high schools now call all new students three weeks before the start of school each year, both to encourage attendance and also to learn which students have moved during the summer so that the school will not have to count them as dropouts. Staff did note that the accountability system has made the dropout rate more important in evaluating school and district performance, but that it has not necessarily resulted in new or innovative dropout prevention measures.[35]

- **Oregon,** too, has set specific dropout standards on which schools and districts are evaluated. The state's report card awards schools one of five ratings that are calculated from an index, in which the dropout rate plays a role. However, in addition to this calculation, the dropout rate took on greater significance in 2000, when the State Superintendent of Education set a goal that Oregon would reduce its dropout rate by 20% or 2,000 students during the 2001-2003 biennium. The

state has already claimed success from this approach, citing a 16% reduction (1,651 students) during the 2000-01 school year. Staff note that Oregon faces the same problems as other states in terms of the accuracy of the data it collects and say that administrators have a natural incentive to 'finagle the numbers' when they are held accountable for them. However, Oregon's Department of Education does provide ongoing technical assistance for schools and districts on data collection and reporting and staff do not perceive this to be a major problem. Oregon's ambitious dropout reduction goal was accompanied by a Dropout Prevention Program, which, unfortunately, has not yet been funded by the Legislature. Instead of a formal program, staff at the Department of Education have been attempting to assist schools with dropout prevention, on the theory that schools can't be held accountable for achieving a new goal if they don't know how to do it. Staff report that many simple dropout prevention strategies have already been implemented (linking students with mentors, monitoring students' academic performance and intervening early) and caution that future, sustained decreases in the dropout rate will require more energy and more funding.[36]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

The authors' review of states' accountability systems suggests four lessons that may be helpful to Washington State in considering how to incorporate dropout rates into its accountability system:

VISIBILITY IS A POSITIVE. A number of states have found that the increase in visibility that comes with reporting dropout or graduation rates in the accountability system – even if those rates are not evaluated to assess schools or districts – can be quite positive. One person who was interviewed for this report noted that publishing dropout rates in an accountability report focuses more attention on the problem. Simply making more people aware of dropout and graduation rates in the context of educational quality can help provide the momentum to address the problem.

EVALUATION CAN SPUR CHANGE – BUT CAN ALSO CREATE UNINTENDED SIDE EFFECTS. Staff in states that evaluate dropout or graduation rates note that their efforts are crucial in helping schools and districts work toward goals. But those who were interviewed were nearly unanimous in noting that evaluating dropout or graduation rates can have unintended side effects, the most notable being that schools and districts have an incentive to find ways to lower their rates to acceptable levels. Policymakers should be aware of both the incentives and the disincentives they may create with any new evaluative measure or goal that is added to an accountability system.

DATA COLLECTION IMPROVEMENTS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE – BUT SCHOOLS NEED HELP. One of the most notable immediate effects of including the dropout rate in an educational accountability system is that schools and districts become much more diligent about following up with students who have dropped out or who appear to be on track to drop out, an improvement which can lead to immediate declines in a school's dropout rate. Those interviewed suggest that technical assistance to schools and districts, perhaps organized through site visits or an accreditation process, can be extremely helpful in ensuring the accuracy of dropout rates and in helping schools reach out to students who have recently dropped out or who may drop out. This lesson reinforces the concerns raised earlier in this report about the accuracy of data in the Washington P210 database. Technical assistance to those charged with entering the data might both increase the accuracy of the data and help schools work more closely with at-risk students.

INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE DRAMATIC – BUT LONG-TERM PROGRESS IS DIFFICULT. Some states that evaluate dropout or graduation rates in their accountability system have found that schools and districts have launched low-cost but quite effective programs in response, to attempt to lower dropout rates. These programs – including calling new students before the start of the school year, assigning mentors to at-risk youth, and monitoring students' academic progress and offering assistance as soon as they fall behind – can have immediate and measurable effects on the dropout rate. But moving beyond these simple measures to achieve continuously improved dropout rates over time can be difficult and expensive, and those interviewed note that reducing the dropout rate must continue to enjoy policy and budgetary support to be successful.

From these lessons, the authors of this report make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Use the authority provided by the Legislature to report graduation rates in the state accountability system. After three years, determine whether specific evaluative measures or goals for graduation rates should be set.

The manner in which other states have incorporated dropout and graduation rates into their accountability systems represents a continuum of approaches. The authors of this report recommend that Washington State move forward on this continuum by requiring that graduation rates (in the cohort format recommended earlier) be reported in the state accountability system.

However, the authors believe that it is premature to set goals by which these rates would be evaluated for specific schools or districts. Instead, the A+ Commission should spend the next three years working with state and district policymakers to improve the accuracy of the data that is collected, monitoring rates using the cohort graduation rate recommended in this report, and identifying schools, districts, or ethnic and racial groups that appear to have particularly low graduation rates.

After this period of study and improvement, the Commission can determine whether to set a statewide goal for graduation rates; group schools or districts by socioeconomic characteristics and compare graduation rates within these groups; or focus action and assistance on specific schools, districts, and/or ethnic and racial groups that have lower than average graduation rates.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

Most of this report is focused on measuring graduation rates and discussing ways schools and districts are held accountable for dropout and graduation rates. But why do students drop out in the first place? And what steps can schools, parents, and policymakers take to encourage students to stay in school and graduate?

DROPOUT FACTORS

As this report has noted earlier, dropping out of school is a process rather than an isolated event. Researchers have found it very difficult to identify a single cause that leads a student to drop out.[37] They caution that predicting a student's behavior is not always clear cut, and note that many students who drop out would not appear to be at risk according to any of the risk factors they have developed. In fact, most of the actual dropouts in the U.S. during the 90s were not from a minority group, not from broken homes, not poor, and not pregnant.[38]

However, researchers have identified four basic and interrelated factors that seem to contribute most to a student's decision to drop out. These factors are:

- **Family Status,** including a student's race, income level, parents' education, and siblings' dropout status.
- **Student Performance,** including grades, performance on achievement tests, and whether or not the student has been held back, or retained, for a year or more.
- **Engagement with school,** including the student's attitude about school, attendance rate, discipline issues, and participation in extracurricular activities.
- **Quality of School,** including the location of the school (urban versus suburban), the school's size, and its dropout rate.

FAMILY STATUS

Students do not attend school in a vacuum. Thus, it stands to reason that attributes of a student's family – including race, income level, and even the expectations the family has for the student – will influence a student's level of success in school and play a factor in a student's decision to drop out.

Race plays a significant role in the dropout issue as it does in many other areas of academic performance. Researchers have noted that Hispanic and African-American students are significantly more likely to drop out than White or Asian Students.[39] Some researchers have carried this analysis further, finding that graduation rates for White and African-American students are similar when controlled for socioeconomic status, but that even with socioeconomic status factored in, Hispanic and Native American students have significantly lower graduation rates.[40]

A student's socioeconomic status is also a factor in how likely that student is to drop out of school. One NCES study found that students in families with incomes in the lowest 20% were six times as likely to drop out as those in the highest 20% income bracket.[41] Income plays a role in a student's likelihood to drop out at least in part because of the factors that contribute to a low income such as female-headed households,[42] very young parents, and, significantly, the student's parents' level of education[43] and the educational experiences of the student's siblings.[44] Students whose parents have low educational levels or whose siblings dropped out of school are,

themselves, more likely to drop out before graduating, as are students who start a family themselves by becoming pregnant or marrying while in high school.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Student performance in school has been identified as perhaps the strongest factor in predicting a student's likelihood of dropping out. Students who do poorly in school – with low grades and poor test scores – as well as students who are overage for their grade because they have repeated a grade are at high risk for dropping out.[45] One study found that students who had been held back a year or more in school were three times more likely to drop out than other students.[46] This factor was identified in the authors' analysis of Washington state enrollment, dropout, and graduation data, and is covered in detail earlier in the report.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL

Students' level of engagement with school – both positive and negative – also plays a role in dropping out. Students who are actively engaged in school (that is, attend classes regularly, participate in extracurricular activities, and, in general, find the school environment supportive and welcoming) are significantly less likely to drop out than those who are less engaged (and are frequently absent from class, do not participate in extracurricular activities, or have disciplinary problems). In fact, a recent study of high school completion in Utah found that the primary reason former students gave for dropping out (with over 72% of respondents listing this response) was that the student 'didn't enjoy' going to school.[47] (The second most common reason listed – chosen by over 60% of respondents—was that they 'didn't do well.')

Disciplinary problems and truancy often lead to a general lack of connection to the school, teachers, and classmates and, in turn, to dropping out. Truancy, for instance, can be an early sign that a student is gradually disengaging from school,[48] while disciplinary problems can increase a student's perception of the school as unfriendly or uncaring. A Seattle Public Schools' longitudinal study on high school dropouts found that "over 30% of the students who eventually dropped out had had some disciplinary action on their record, while only half as many of the graduates had been disciplined."[49]

QUALITY OF SCHOOL

Good schools and good teachers can make an incredible difference in a student's life. Conversely, poor schools with overworked or unmotivated teachers or schools in which students perceive that they are not safe can create an atmosphere in which it is easy for students to drop out. An account of one student's dropout experience as reported this summer in the *LA Weekly* described a decrepit, inner-city school in which classrooms didn't have enough desks and teachers didn't know a fraction of their students.[50]

That anecdotal report correlates with research that shows that the dropout rate is associated with school characteristics, including the school's size, resources, and level of support for at-risk students.[51] Attending a large, central city high school – studies show – increases the dropout rate for both White and African-American students.[52]

ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

A number of academic and educational organizations have developed lists of the attributes of successful dropout prevention programs. The authors of this report have distilled these attributes to five basic ones that schools and districts can use as the cornerstone of dropout prevention programs:

- **Awareness** of students and their needs so that principals, teachers, and parents are immediately aware if a student is cutting classes, is absent for long periods, or has dropped out.
- **Early Intervention** as soon as a student begins having trouble in school (either academically or with discipline) to help the student get back on track.
- **Adult Mentoring** to ensure that each student has at least one adult to whom he or she feels accountable. This adult can be a teacher, a coach, an employer, or a community member.
- **Alternative Opportunities to Learn** from full-scale programs that are an alternative to a traditional high school to smaller, in-classroom opportunities for students with different learning styles to learn and succeed.
- **School Reform Where Needed** in schools or districts with consistently high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and low levels of academic performance.

AWARENESS

As the discussion about statewide accountability systems above noted, more awareness of students and their needs can not only ensure more accurate dropout counts, but can also serve to reduce the dropout rate. Because dropping out is generally characterized by a gradual disengagement from the school, more careful attention to students' needs can enable teachers and principals to quickly identify students who are missing classes on a regular basis, students who have unexcused absences, students who are having disciplinary problems, and students who are falling behind in their academic work. With this information, teachers, parents, and administrators can step in to provide early help and get the student back on track.

A report on Hispanic youth who drop out of school notes that schools must be alert to early signs of student disengagement, and should make concerted, personal attempts to contact the student and the student's parent if a student begins missing school or cutting classes.[53]

Many researchers point to the active involvement of parents in the school as key to students' long-term success. Parents can be more fully involved when schools have the information to alert parents early when students may need more help.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Once a school realizes that a student is having problems – either behavioral or academic – the school must engage the student and his or her parents and intervene immediately. This point holds true whether the student is in elementary school or high school: schools cannot wait until a student has failed a course, missed a month or two of school, or been found to be a year's worth short of credits a month before graduation. Instead, schools must act early and quickly to help the student succeed.[54] Prevention activities that have been found successful in this area include

incentives for better attendance, parental involvement programs, tutoring, mentoring, and community-based learning opportunities.[55]

Researchers caution that early interventions alone will not be enough to prevent students from dropping out. Rather, they note, early interventions must be the beginning of a school's active engagement with a student with continued assistance and activity over the years to keep the student engaged and succeeding.[56]

A report completed earlier this year by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) showcased a Tukwila School District program in this area:

> The Tukwila School District aims to improve student achievement in school by focusing on school, family, and community collaborations. According to officials, the District offers mentoring and tutoring programs, internships, and an array of health and social services… A longitudinal study of the District's program during the 1994-1996 school years found that 58% of the elementary students who received human services from district service providers and/or community agencies had higher grades than a control group of students who did not receive services, and 74% of secondary school students receiving services had improved their course completion rates after two semesters of service.[57]

ADULT MENTORING

A study on dropout prevention among Hispanic youth pointed, as many others have, to the importance of a caring, committed adult in a student's life. That study found that students who remained in school often identified someone – a teacher, coach, some other school staff member, or someone from the larger community – whose personal interest convinced them to stay in school and to work to be successful.[58]

On the other side of that finding, a study of Seattle Public Schools dropouts noted that fewer than one-third of the students who dropped out of school spoke to either a school counselor, a teacher, the principal or a coach before dropping out. And, once these students had left school, only one fourth of them reported having been contacted by anyone about returning to school.[59]

Individualized attention from an adult that is focused around a student's needs can occur through mental health or academic counseling, a service-learning or work-based learning experience, the classroom, or an extracurricular activity. Key to success in this area, in whatever format, is providing forums through smaller schools, schools-within-a-school, or other personalized settings in which students can receive individual attention from adults who have come to know them.[60]

ALTERNATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

On the theory that some students cannot learn effectively through traditional instruction methods and that youth who have already dropped out of school may have difficulty transitioning back into the classroom, many researchers point to the value of alternative opportunities through which students can learn and succeed. These alternative opportunities can be as simple as offering contextual learning opportunities in the classroom and as complex as entirely new schools or schools-within-a-school dedicated to the needs of certain students.

The Seahawks Academy is a Seattle program that has won national renown in recent years as an effective alternative program.[61] The Seahawks Academy is a small alternative school for 7th, 8th and 9th graders who have been unsuccessful in traditional middle and high schools. The school offers smaller class sizes, tutors, mentors, no-cost health care, and social services. Academy

officials point to improved test scores, fewer discipline problems, and no suspensions or expulsions for the last two school years as evidence of the academy's success.[62]

Alternative programs are arguably most essential to youth who have already dropped out and need a way to transition back into school. Alternative programs can help these youth make up lost credits, evaluate and modify their behavior, set goals for the future, and/or work towards a GED certificate if re-enrollment in a traditional high school is not possible. These programs might also include flexible hours, mental health counseling, childcare, or other services to help the youth transition back into the classroom. Unfortunately, budget cuts forced the consolidation and reduction in funding earlier this year of a number of programs into the Flexible Education Fund, a block grant that is made available to districts for a number of activities. One of the programs that was consolidated into the Flexible Education Fund (but which was consolidated into the fund without any funding) was the Washington State Education Center (formerly Education Clinic) program, through which community-based agencies around the state operated state-certified alternative education programs for youth who had dropped out or been kicked out of school. It is unclear whether districts will choose to contract with non-profit Education Centers for their services given that the total amount available in the Flexible Education Fund, through which districts must fund a number of activities, has been decreased.

SCHOOL REFORM WHERE NEEDED

Because school quality plays a role in students' decisions to drop out, whole school (or whole district) reform may be needed in instances in which a school has a consistently high dropout rate and/or low test scores.[63] School reform programs may include some or all of the following attributes:

- Administration of programs by agencies outside of schools;
- School-based management;
- A focus on instructional leadership on the part of the principal;
- Fair but uncompromising discipline programs;
- Flexible programming and scheduling;
- Community and business collaboration;
- Staff selection and development;
- Transition programs;
- Definition and accounting procedures regarding dropout-prone students;
- Early intervention efforts;
- School-wide agreement on goals, objectives, and rules;
- Teacher autonomy;
- Reduction of suspensions and retentions;
- Elimination of tracking;
- Involvement of community role models;
- Promotion of business partnerships and community learning; and
- Collaborations between high schools and colleges.[64]

One example of a school-wide restructuring effort is the Talent Development program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This high school reform model was identified recently by the U.S. GAO in its study of dropout prevention practices. The Talent Development program seeks to improve large high schools that have problems with attendance, discipline, academic performance, and dropout rates. The model has already been implemented in four high schools and will soon be implemented in two more. Schools using this model create 9th grade academies and career academies for 10th through 12th grade students, pilot alternative evening classes, and implement 90-minute block scheduling so that students and teachers spend more time together. Reports from the district indicate that student performance in these schools has improved significantly.[65]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DROPOUT PREVENTION

The discussion above pointed to a continuum of efforts that schools and districts can undertake to prevent students from dropping out of school and to reengage those who have already dropped out. This continuum provides the basis for the authors' recommendation to the A+ Commission on dropout prevention:

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Use nationally-tested attributes of successful dropout prevention program to focus on two groups of students: those who indicate (by behavior or grades) that they are at risk for dropping out; and those who have dropped out but can be helped to transition back into school.

One of the key pieces of advice on dropout prevention from education officials around the country who were interviewed for this report was that teachers and school administrators must be aware of students and their needs so that they can intervene quickly when those students begin the move toward dropping out. Being aware of students' needs, in turn, requires data – about students who are missing class, or failing a class, or struggling on assessments. Thus, mirroring earlier recommendations made in this paper, the authors recommend that state and district policymakers work with school administrators and staff to improve data collection and to use that data to respond to the needs of students who are still in school but may not be for long.

For students who have already dropped out of school. alternative opportunities for education and, if possible, for a transition back to school, are crucial. Policymakers at the state and district levels should evaluate their ability to fund programs aimed at helping students who have dropped out of school return to complete their education.

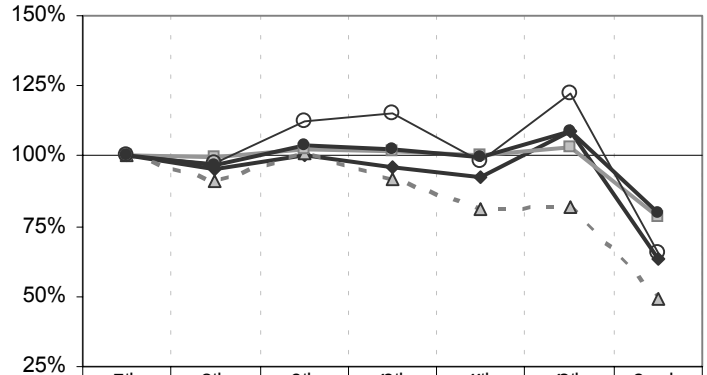
APPENDIX A: DISTRICT GRADUATION RATE ANALYSIS

One of the most formidable challenges facing those wishing to hold schools accountable for students' success at graduating is the fact that each district (not to mention each school) has so many complex factors entering into consideration of its student body and how it fares over the years. Data from five districts in Washington State were analyzed to see how a cohort analysis using both October count and P210 data might be used at the district level. The five districts are:

- **Seattle** and **Tacoma** (both large and having at least 75 students in each of the five racial groups in the first year of the cohort tracking);
- **Spokane** and **Lake Washington** (with Seattle and Tacoma, among the five largest in the state, but with much less racial diversity); and
- **Yakima** (smaller, but with substantial numbers of Latino students and relatively few other minorities.)

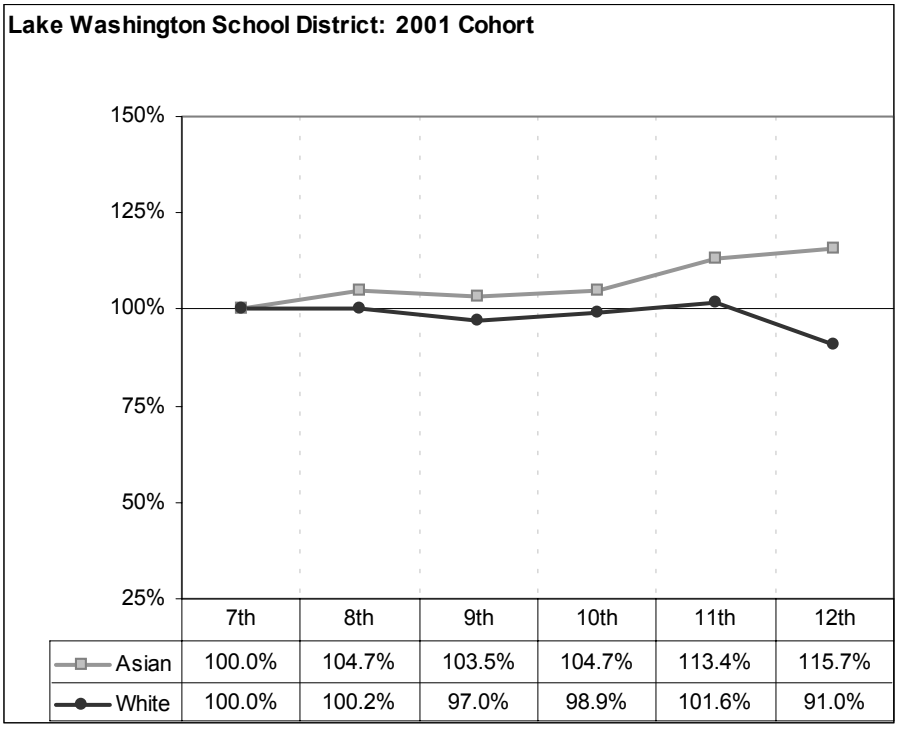
The five charts below provide a vivid illustration of the diversity within the state. They also illustrate the fact that many districts, even the largest in the state, have relatively few minority students. When the numbers in any given school, or even in the entire district, are small, it is impossible to arrive at numbers that are reliable and reflect the reality in the district. In some cases, graduation rates will have to be calculated for an entire school or district without any regard to the race or economic status of the students.

Seattle School District: 2001 Cohort

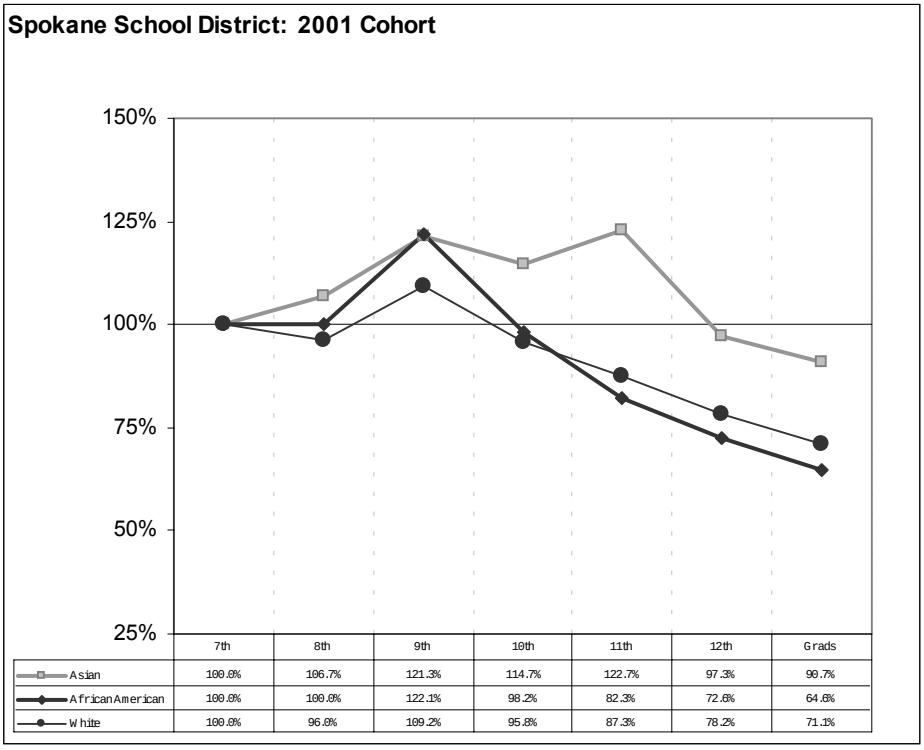


	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Grads
African American	100.0%	95.5%	100.4%	96.3%	92.3%	109.0%	63.5%
American Indian	100.0%	91.1%	100.9%	92.0%	81.3%	82.1%	49.1%
Asian	100.0%	99.5%	102.5%	101.6%	100.5%	102.9%	78.4%
Latino	100.0%	97.6%	112.2%	115.4%	98.0%	122.4%	65.4%
White	100.0%	96.9%	104.2%	102.7%	99.8%	108.6%	79.7%

SEATTLE	7th grade enrollment '95-96
American Indian	112
Asian	876
African American	808
Latino	254
White	1,268
Total Seattle	3,318

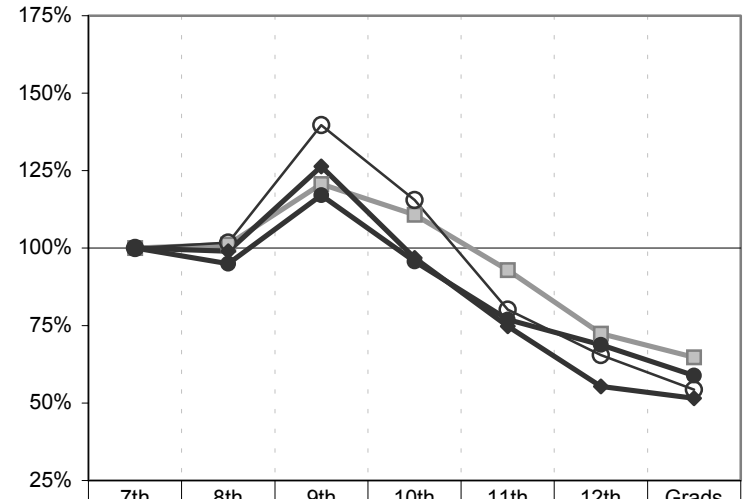


LK WASHINGTON	7th grade enrollment '95-96
American Indian	4
Asian	172
African American	55
Latino	58
White	1,586
Total Lake Washington	1,875



SPOKANE	7th grade enrollment '95-96
American Indian	49
Asian	75
African American	113
Latino	51
White	2,240
Total Spokane	2,528

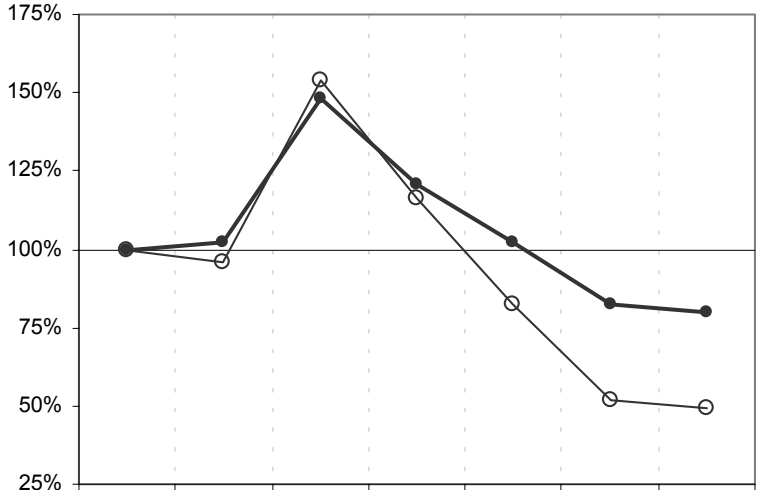
Tacoma School District: 2001 Cohort



	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Grads
Asian	100.0%	101.1%	120.7%	110.7%	92.8%	72.5%	64.7%
African American	100.0%	99.0%	126.4%	96.8%	74.8%	55.4%	51.6%
Latino	100.0%	101.7%	139.7%	115.5%	80.2%	65.5%	54.3%
White	100.0%	95.0%	117.0%	95.7%	76.9%	68.8%	58.8%

TACOMA	7th grade enrollment '95-96
American Indian	75
Asian	363
African American	504
Latino	116
White	1,453
Total Tacoma	2,511

Yakima School District: 2001 Cohort



	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Grads
Latino	100.0%	96.1%	154.2%	116.1%	82.6%	52.1%	49.5%
White	100.0%	101.9%	148.2%	121.0%	102.3%	82.5%	79.6%

YAKIMA	7th grade enrollment '95-96
American Indian	28
Asian	17
African American	30
Latino	380
White	515
Total Yakima	970

APPENDIX B: STATE SUMMARY

ALABAMA					
Alabama State Department of Education			www.alsde.edu/html/home.asp		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Implementation of the state's accountability law is one of the Classroom Assessment Department's major responsibilities. Assessment seems to refer only to student passing rates on Alabama High School Graduation Examination and Stanford Achievement Test Scores.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
7-12 dropout rate counts at http://www.alsde.edu/AllReportCards/00_Annual_Report.pdf Quick Facts publication with 9-12 rates only at: http://www.alsde.edu/allreportcards/quick_facts.pdf Quick Facts publication shows a 'projected four-year rate,' which appears to be a cohort rate.					

ALASKA					
Alaska Department of Education & Early Development			www.educ.state.ak.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Quality Schools Initiative provides overall framework for education reform and assessment. Standards for Quality Schools are being developed as the basis for building a comprehensive school accreditation system. Neither Standards for Schools or Standards for Administrators refer to dropout reduction as an assessment measure. Individual school 'report cards' do list dropout rate for each.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
7-12 dropout rate counts at www.eed.state.ak.us/stats/DropoutRates/2000-2001DropoutRatesbyEthnicity.pdf OASIS (On-line Alaska School Information System) uses unique student identifiers.					

ARIZONA

Arizona State Department of Education	www.ade.az.gov/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event & Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes*

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

SAIS (Student Accountability Information System) is a statewide, automated database that uses student identifiers. MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) for schools focuses on academic progress of students. Beginning in 2002, dropout rate will be considered part of accountability system. State's report on cohort graduation rate of class of 2000 is its first effort to do this.	**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.

Notes and Citations:

http://www.ade.az.gov/researchpolicy/dropoutinfo/2000-2001DORreport.pdf
New cohort study that shows 71% graduation rate: http://www.ade.az.gov/researchpolicy/grad/2000GradRateReport.pdf
*Student Accountability Information System is not yet fully operational (per 7/02 cohort study).

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Department of Education	http://arkedu.state.ar.us/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Quality Schools Initiative provides overall framework for education reform and assessment. Standards for Quality Schools are being developed as the basis for building a comprehensive school accreditation system. Neither Standards for Schools or Standards for Administrators refer to dropout reduction as an assessment measure. Individual school 'report cards' do list dropout rate for each.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Statistics and information available at http://www.as-is.org
Supplementary information provided by Barbara Bankhead: bbankhead@arkedu.k12.ar.us

CALIFORNIA

California Department of Education			www.cde.ca.gov/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes*
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
California Public School Accountability Act of 1999 resulted in the API (Academic Performance Index) on which schools are rated. API focuses on test scores, but also includes attendance and graduation rates. Data tracked through CBEDS (CA Basic Educational Data System).			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Data collection information at California Student Information Services: http://www.csis.k12.ca.us/ API reports that show API is based on testing only: http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api/api0102/base/sum01b.htm DataQuest information shows derived 4-year dropout rate: http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/state.asp?cChoice=GradeEth&cYear=2000-01&cLevel=State&submit1=Submit *State data system is not yet fully funded nor used in all schools: http://www.laweekly.com/ink/printme.php?eid=36727					

COLORADO

Colorado Department of Education			www.cde.state.co.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Colorado Accreditation Program requires schools to report on test scores as well as on graduation and dropout rates.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
State report cards show dropouts. Cohort (4-year) rate is also computed. See below for report: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/download/pdf/2001%20Dropouts/2001StateSumDropbyRaceGrade.pdf Colorado has an Automated Date Exchange System, which appears to include Student ID's.					

CONNECTICUT					
Connecticut State Department of Education			www.state.ct.us/sde/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event & Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	By 10/02
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Connecticut's Comprehensive Plan for Education 1996-2000 calls for improvements in academic progress. Schools are grouped into **Education Reference Groups** of similar schools. Dropout rates are compared within these groups. Connecticut has no carrots or sticks, but uses publicity of School Profiles (with ERG comparisons) to ensure accountability.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** Individual schools are grouped into Education Reference Groups of similar schools and compared.		
Notes and Citations:					
Both Event and Cohort rates are calculated: http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/edfacts/index.htm State also publishes a report about high school rates only: http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/databuilletins/db_7_2001_dropout.pdf Public School Information System will use unique student identifiers by October 2002: http://www.state.ct.us/sde/circ/circ01-02/c-22.pdf CONTACTS: Robert Lucco – 860-713-6875 (Robert.lucco@po.state.ct.us) and Alison Zhou 860-713-6893.					

DELAWARE

Delaware Department of Education			www.doe.state.de.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Students and schools are assessed using DSTP (Delaware Student Testing Program). Assessment does not appear related to dropout rates.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Delaware uses a State Student Identifier: http://www.doe.state.de.us/reporting/data_calendar/DataAcqCalendar0102.PDF Latest dropout report: http://www.doe.state.de.us/reporting/Dropout/2000-01/DropoutReport0001.pdf					

FLORIDA

Florida Department of Education			www.firn.edu/doe/doehome.htm		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Florida's System of School Improvement & Accountability is based on eight goals (revised in 1999). Goal 2 speaks to graduation rate. FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests) are measured in accountability.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
List of event dropout rates (cohort can be derived to some extent from 4-year graduation rate): http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/eiaspubs/2001grad.htm More information on dropouts: http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/eiaspubs/pdf/dropdemo.pdf Description of 10-character ID code: http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/dataweb/database_0203/student_0203/elementu/pdfeelu/st152_1.pdf					

GEORGIA					
Georgia Department of Education			www.doe.k12.ga.us/index.asp		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12*	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 created Office of Education Accountability, over protests of State Department of Education. That office focuses on two goals: student achievement and school completion. Assessments are being ramped in through 2005; the Office does not currently appear to be evaluating graduation rates.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout data element in state report card is defined as 9-12 only; however, individual middle school report cards show totals for grades 6-8. Unclear if they are tracked through high school. According to Lynn Latimer (Llatimer@doe.k12.ga.us) state DOES use a unique student ID.					

HAWAII					
Hawaii Department of Education			http://doe.k12.hi.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event & Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	???
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
The Comprehensive Assessment & Accountability System (CAAS) led to a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), which, in turn, led to School Status & Improvements Reports (SSIR). These reports include graduation rates, and the CNA refers to dropout rates, but there is no evaluation of dropout rates.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates reported (p. 26) at: http://arch.k12.hi.us/pdf/report/2000/SuptRept2000.pdf					

IDAHO

Idaho State Department of Education			www.sde.state.id.us/Dept/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Not yet
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Idaho Achieves, the state's accountability system, reports dropout rates as part of each school's assessment. However, all attention, details, and goals appear to be focused around the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT).			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates (9-12) as part of overall school report here: http://www.sde.state.id.us/Finance/profiles99-00/docs/01/State.pdf State Department of Education seeking State funds to implement an Idaho Schools Information Management System, to start 2003.					

ILLINOIS

Illinois State Board of Education			www.isbe.state.il.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Not yet
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
The Better Schools Accountability Law of 1985 led to the development of the Illinois Learning Standards of 1997. These are measured largely through student performance on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Dropout rates are noted on each school's report card, but not reported in the accountability system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates reported here: http://www.isbe.net/research/broch00.htm Definition of dropout here: http://www.isbe.net/research/reportcarddef01.htm Department seeking funding for new information system: http://www.isbe.net/board/meetings/april02meeting/datawcover.pdf					

INDIANA

Indiana Department of Education			http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Cohort*	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Piloting**
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Public Law 221, passed in 1999, established an accountability and accreditation system. Accountability is largely based on student performance in the ISTEP exams, although graduation rate is a required element in a School Improvement Plan. Dropout rates for individual schools are compared with state median and similar schools. Three-year accreditation system ranks schools.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** Dropout rates compared with state median as well as similar schools.		
Notes and Citations:					
School report cards compare each school to state average and can pull out groups of similar schools for comparison. These reports show graduation rate: http://doe.state.in.us/asap/data.html Dropout definitions: http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/DROP/drdef.html *Most reports are based on graduation rate, which is roughly the inverse of cohort rate. **Information on piloting of Student Test Numbers: http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/stn/qanda2final.html Mary Mickelson, Director, Division of Performance-based Accreditation 317-232-9060 mmickels@doe.state.in.us					

IOWA

Iowa Department of Education			www.state.ia.us/educate/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Some*
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Iowa has just begun a 'Focus on High Schools' that will not conclude until the end of 2002.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout report: http://www.state.ia.us/educate/fis/pre/eddata/ied02/ied02f.xls *Department has recently launched Project EASIER to expand district data system capabilities. This system allows transfer of student records between systems. However, not all districts use this yet.					

KANSAS

Kansas State Department of Education	www.ksbe.state.ks.us/Welcome.html

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	Method:	Event	Individual Student Identifier:	No

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

"Education in Kansas," the state's 2000-01 Accountability Report, reports dropout and graduation rates. However, these rates are not evaluated. Instead, all focus is on results of standardized testing.	**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.

Notes and Citations:

For dropout reports, go to Publications & Software, then select Data – K-12 Schools in Kansas
According to Steve Adams (sadams@ksde.org) the state may consider adding an individual student identifier to satisfy ESEA.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky Department of Education	www.kde.state.ky.us/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	Method:	Event	Individual Student Identifier:	No

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Kentucky adopted new standards in June 2001. The state has an accountability testing system (CATS – Commonwealth Accountability Testing System). Dropout rates for 9-12 (with some information on 7-8) are analyzed in a report that is part of the Office of Assessment & Accountability, but there are no goals for reducing dropout rates and dropout rates do not appear to be tied to accountability system.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Guidelines for dropout report: http://www.kde.state.ky.us/commiss/orp/dpmr/Nonacademic.asp
According to Kevin Hill (khill@kde.state.ky.us) the state is in the process of implementing an enterprise data system that will require the use of unique identifiers.

LOUISIANA

Louisiana Department of Education	www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

The 1999 Legislature created a School Accountability System, to which high school was added in 2001. The system sets Accountability Growth Targets and School Performance Scores. Dropout rates and trends are reported in the 2000-01 Louisiana State Education Progress Report, but there are no specific evaluative measures.	**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.

Notes and Citations:

Report cards do compare dropout and other issues with state as a whole:
http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=REPORTD

Student information system collects information on each student.

MAINE

Maine State Department of Education	www.state.me.us/education/homepage.htm

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Legislature adopted the Maine Learning Results in 1996. The Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) and Maine Assessment Portfolio (MAP) content standards have been developed to measure learning results. Dropout and graduation results are not reported in this system.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Dropout information: http://www.state.me.us/education/enroll/dropouts/dropbyyear.htm
According to Patrick Dow (Patrick.dow@state.me.us) the state is starting to plan a student ID system in the future.

MARYLAND

Maryland State Department of Education	www.msde.state.md.us/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Maryland has been implementing standards since the late 1980s. Its Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) exams for elementary and middle schools and High School Assessment (HSA) exams for high schools are part of an overall accountability system that was ranked #1 in the nation in 2001 by *Education Week*. The state has dropout prevention programs at middle and high school level, but these do not appear tied to the accountability standards for schools.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Dropout information: http://msp.msde.state.md.us/state.asp
State uses a student ID #: http://www.msde.state.md.us/publications/student_records_manual.pdf

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Department of Education	www.doe.mass.edu/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

The State Legislature passed an Education Reform Act in 1993. This School Performance Rating Process system appears to rank schools only on students' progress on the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) tests. Dropout rates are tracked and published annually, but there appears to be no link to school assessment.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Dropout rates: http://www.doe.mass.edu/InfoServices/reports/dropout/9900/results.html
Student Information Management System (SIMS) has unique student ID: http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/

MICHIGAN					
Michigan Department of Education			www.mde.state.mi.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Education YES! (Yardstick for Excellent Schools) accreditation process was adopted in March 2002. System uses scores from MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) as well as other academic factors. Dropout and graduation rates are reported but do not appear linked to system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout report at: http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/1,1607,7-113-990-3574--,00.html Single Record Student Data information at: http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/1,1607,7-113-1029-4099--F,00.html					

MINNESOTA					
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning			www.educ.state.mn.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
State recently developed "Choices for Change," a report on school accountability to follow legislation in 1999. System relies mainly on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). Dropout rates are reported, but do not appear to be evaluated.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Choices for Change report, p. 48 discusses dropout/completion: http://cfl.state.mn.us/choices_for_change.pdf Dropout reports here: http://cfl.state.mn.us/datactr/drops/index.htm Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) system uses Social Security Number: http://cfl.state.mn.us/autorep/mardocs/manual/definitions.pdf					

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Department of Education			www.mde.k12.ms.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	1-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act of 1999 led to Mississippi School Accountability Standards of 2001, which will be implemented beginning in 2003. These focus on student performance on Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) for elementary and middle schools and Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) for high school. Dropout rates are published in school report cards, but do not appear linked to accountability system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout report at: http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/account/2002report/Drop02.htm Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) includes a unique student identifier: http://c2t.mde.k12.ms.us/msis/index.html					

MISSOURI

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education			www.dese.state.mo.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No*
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Senate Bill 380, the Outstanding Schools Act, set up an accreditation system, the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). The system is just being implemented, but the scorecard for schools includes a ranking for dropout (though no information about how or if this ranking is evaluated).			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates here: http://www.dese.state.mo.us/schooldata/ *According to Leigh Ann Grant-Engle (lgranten@mail.dese.state.mo.us) the state does not use a unique identifier for students; however, testing companies and individual districts may use them.					

MONTANA					
Montana Office of Public Instruction			www.opi.state.mt.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
The state publishes a Montana Statewide Education Profile. This profile includes dropout and graduate rates and discusses them as key to school success, but does not attempt to evaluate them or to tie them to school assessment or accountability.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates here: www.opi.state.mt.us/Measurement/Index.html Montana uses a data collection system called IRIS (Internet Reporting & Information Service)					

NEBRASKA					
Nebraska Department of Education			www.nde.state.ne.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Nebraska State of the Schools Report includes dropout rates, but is just a report card – does not include link between rates and accountability.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates listed as part of statewide report card: http://reportcard.nde.state.ne.us/Download/ReportCard20002001_Students1.pdf Student Performance Reporting System for data entry: http://www.ndestandardsinput.com/ School-based Teacher-led Assessment Report System (STARS): http://www.nde.state.ne.us/starsdocs.html According to Ms. Naber (jnaber@nde.state.ne.us) state does NOT use an individual student identifier.					

NEVADA

Nevada Department of Education			www.nde.state.nv.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event*	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
NRS 385.347 required regular school accountability reports. Nevada is developing academic standards in a number of subject areas as well as high school proficiency tests. Dropout rates are called out as a part of the information that will be available through the accountability system, but no information on evaluating dropout rates is provided.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout rates and methodology here: http://kidscount.unlv.edu/ed-dropout_2001.pdf Dropout report's calculation of graduation rate uses cohort method of dropout rate calculation. According to David Smith of staff, Nevada does use a unique student identifier.					

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Department of Education			www.ed.state.nh.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
New Hampshire Educational Improvement & Assessment Program (NHEIAP) focuses on statewide assessment tests. Dropout rates are mentioned in the "State Enrollment Report" as part of the statewide school report card, but do not seemed to be geared to assessment. State's 'Promising Practices' list does not include dropout prevention.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout calculation methodology: http://www.ed.state.nh.us/ReportsandStatistics/Dropout%20Instructions.html Dropout rates here: http://www.ed.state.nh.us/ReportsandStatistics/Dropout%205-30-02.htm According to Kathleen Schoeneman (kSchoeneman@ed.state.nh.us) state does NOT use individual student identifiers.					

NEW JERSEY					
New Jersey Department of Education			www.state.nj.us/education		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12*	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
New Jersey's Whole School Reform is focused around the Abbott Districts, 28 urban districts that were the subject of several lawsuits. School Accountability Plans for those districts include extensive reporting on dropout and graduation rates plus specific information on each school's goals and benchmarks.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** Dropout rates are compared with state average.		
Notes and Citations:					
Data Collection Information Center: http://www.state.nj.us/njded/data/collections/ *Detailed dropout information is collected for 7-12, though information for PreK-6 is available at: http://www.state.nj.us/njded/data/vitaled0001-s3.pdf State report cards: http://nj.evalsoft.com/njPDF/defaultDMZ.asp According to IT staff (doeit@doe.state.nj.us) the state does not use an individual student ID, though is investigating using.					

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico State Department of Education			http://sde.state.nm.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
New Mexico's Accountability Program for Schools includes an Accountability Data System that uses student Social Security Numbers for tracking. Dropout rates are tracked in this system with scores for schools based on hard numbers: 1% or less = exemplary, 1.1-4.0% = exceeds standards, 4.1-7.0% = meets standards; and 7.0 or greater = probationary. (For middle school, probationary = greater than 2.5%.)			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** Absolute numerical targets are used to evaluate schools.		
Notes and Citations:					
Measures for accountability system: http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.019.0001.htm Dropout report here: http://sde.state.nm.us/divisions/ais/datacollection/resources/99dropout.pdf Accountability data system: http://sde.state.nm.us/divisions/ais/datacollection/adsmanual0203r.pdf					

NEW YORK

New York State Education Department			www.nysed.gov/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
SASS (System of Accountability for Student Success) sets Adequate Yearly Progress Targets (AYPs) for schools. One goal is that annual high school dropout rate will be less than 5%.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** An absolute numerical goal is used.		
Notes and Citations:					
Discussion of accountability standards, including dropout: http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/SASS/SASS-fieldmemo-att.PDF Information about individual student ID's as part of data tracking system: http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/hscohort/Student%20Cohort%20Database%20System%20Manual%202001.pdf					

NORTH CAROLINA					
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction			www.ncpublicschools.org/about_dpi/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
North Carolina's Student Accountability Standards are focused solely on test scores.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Statistical report, see table 17 for dropouts: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/stats/StatProfile02.pdf					

NORTH DAKOTA					
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction			www.dpi.state.nd.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
North Dakota Assessment Program is based solely on test scores. Education Improvement Process – a combined internal/external school reform movement, does not report dropout rates as an assessment measure for schools.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Information about data collected on dropouts: http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/resource/graddrop.shtm North Dakota has an extensive on-line reporting system, but it is not clear if this system includes individual student identifiers: http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/finance/ors/orsqa.shtm#_How_do_I According to Jerry Coleman (jcoleman@mail.dpi.stat.nd.us) the state does not have a unique student ID, though is working on it.					

OHIO					
Ohio Department of Education			www.ode.state.oh.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event & Status	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Ohio's assessment standards include test scores and other indicators. Graduation rate is one of 27 performance indicators, and 90% graduation rate is minimum state standard.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** Absolute numerical goal is used.		
Notes and Citations:					
Ohio report card, shows graduation rate standard: http://www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard/state_report_card/2002StateReportCard.pdf Statewide Student Identifier: http://www.ode.state.oh.us/emis/information/ssid.asp State focuses on graduation rate, provides only rough data for dropouts: http://www.ode.state.oh.us/data/ranking.asp					

OKLAHOMA					
Oklahoma State Department of Education			www.sde.state.ok.us/home/defaultie.html		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Academic Performance Index is based on a combination of test scores (80%) and other factors including dropout rates. Each school has a score based on these factors.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** schools' API's compared against state average.		
Notes and Citations:					
For information on Academic Performance Index, go to Home Page, click on Site Map, then select Academic Performance Index. Also, see Education Statistics on Site Map. According to Jennifer Morris (Jennifer_Morris@sde.state.ok.us) state does NOT use a unique state-wide identifier.					

OREGON

Oregon Department of Education	www.ode.state.or.us/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event & Status	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century, passed in 1991, established an accountability system that was based on content standards and a set of assessment tests. Dropout rate is included in the accountability system, as a small part of the index on which schools are rated. In addition, that same year the Legislature required the Department of Education to begin producing a report on 7-12 grade dropout. The State Board of Education used that report to set a goal for the 2001-03 biennium for a reduction in the number of dropouts by 20% or 2,000 students. At the end of the 2000-01 school year, the state reported that dropout numbers had been reduced by 16%.	**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. ***3B:*** *The Department of Education has set clear goals and reports dropout rates in relation to these goals.*

Notes and Citations:

Dropout Reporting Manual: http://dbi.ode.state.or.us/docs/dropoutmanual-02.pdf
Secure Student ID Project: http://www.ode.state.or.us/supportservices/memos/2000_01/305-01.htm
Dropout targets: http://www.ode.state.or.us/news/releases/2002/011702.htm
Dropout initiative by Superintendent to reduce dropout rates:
http://www.ode.state.or.us/news/releases/2000/11_21_00.htm
Information from Bob Jones, Research Analyst, School Finance Data & Analysis, 503-378-3600 x2634

PENNSYLVANIA					
Pennsylvania Department of Education			www.pde.state.pa.us/pde_internet/site/default.asp		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Pennsylvania's School Performance Funding (SPF) is based on both the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) and attendance rates – though not dropout rates. Schools are awarded money based on their performance compared with their own performance the previous year. Dropout rate is not part of this system, though is reported on school profile report cards. However, the state does operate the Successful Students' Partnership (SSP) that provides funds to individual districts to design and implement dropout prevention program.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout report with definitions: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/lib/k12statistics/00-01dropbysch2.pdf Information on School Performance Funding initiative: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_initiatives/cwp/view.asp?a=173&Q=56500 According to Gerald Hottinger (ghottinger@state.pa.us) state does not use unique student identifiers.					

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	www.ridoe.net/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Rhode Island's overall school accountability system includes dropout rate as part of its 'Various School Indicators' list, and dropout rates are compared with the district and overall state rate.	**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** School rates are compared with district and state.

Notes and Citations:

Accountability school indicators: http://infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2002/userguide/Field7.asp#Field%207
Dropout rate definition: http://infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2002/userguide/Field7.asp
Dropout rate is defined as 100 – graduation rate.
According to Terry Bergner (ride0010@ride.ri.net) states does not use a unique student identifier.

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Department of Education	www.sde.state.sc.us/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

Education Accountability Act of 1998 led to formation of the Education Oversight Committee and to the development of school report cards. These report cards include dropout rate, which is compared with last year's performance of that school, median level for state, and to 'schools with students like ours.' Schools can also receive financial incentives for keeping dropout rate below a certain level.	**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3A:** Reports cards compare dropout rate for each school with 'schools with students like ours' and with median state rate. (Note: last year's rate for each school is also shown.)

Notes and Citations:

Definition of dropout rate: http://www.sde.state.sc.us/Reportcard/resources.htm#terms%20used
Report cards showing dropout rate comparisons: http://www.sde.state.sc.us/Reportcard/
State's student information system SASIxp provides individual student information:
http://www.myscschools.com/offices/Technology/dts/sasi/

SOUTH DAKOTA

Department of Education & Cultural Affairs	www.state.sd.us/deca/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	7-12	Method:	Event	Individual Student Identifier:	Yes

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

South Dakota uses the DACS (Dakota Assessment of Content Standards) to measure student and district progress. Dropout rates are published in school profiles, but not reported as accountability.	**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.

Notes and Citations:

Citation for State longitudinal data with dropout information:
http://www.state.sd.us/deca/data/01digest/1%20State%20Longitudinal.pdf
State's Student Information Management System (SIMS) uses unique identifier:
http://www.state.sd.us/deca/DATA/element.htm
New, Web-based dducampus.net information system will link all districts via Internet for transmission of records.

TENNESSEE

Tennessee Department of Education	www.state.tn.us/education/

Dropout Rate Data Collection

Grade Levels:	K-12	Method:	Event	Individual Student Identifier:	

Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System

The state's 1992 Education Improvement Act led to the development of the Gateway Testing Initiative as well as to school report cards. Dropout rate is included on these report cards with the goal that a school have less than 10% of its students drop out between 9th and 12th grades. Schools and districts receive a letter grade for their performance in this area.	**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** Numerical standard is used.

Notes and Citations:

Dropout definitions: http://www.state.tn.us/education/eis/andropout.pdf
Education Information System (EIS) data description (including unique ID):
http://www.state.tn.us/education/eis/eisrecall01.pdf
Dropout rate goal of 10% max explained: http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/rptcrd.htm

TEXAS

Texas Education Agency			www.tea.state.tx.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Texas Accountability System uses Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TAAS) and dropout rates as its Base Indicators. On dropout rates, schools are rated: Exemplary for 1% or less; Recognized for 2.5% or less; Acceptable for 5% or less; and Low Performance for 7.5% or less.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** Numerical standard is used.		
Notes and Citations:					
Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) includes student ID: www.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/0203/ds2.doc Dropout definitions and accountability standards listed here: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2002/manual/index.html					

UTAH

Utah State Office of Education			www.usoe.k12.ut.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Utah's U-PASS accountability system (Utah Performance Assessment System for Students) consists primarily of a set of assessment exams. In addition, schools are required to produce a written report that includes dropout rate among other information. Dropout rate does not appear to be evaluated, however.			**Category 2:** Dropout and/or graduation rates are reported in state's accountability system but are not evaluated.		
Notes and Citations:					
U-PASS system description: http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/u-pass/ Dropout definition + information about unique identifier: http://www.rules.state.ut.us/publicat/code/r277/r277-419.htm Inclusion of dropouts in state's U-PASS accountability performance reports: http://www.le.state.ut.us/~code/TITLE53A/htm/53A04045.htm February 2002 report on high school completion: http://csfnt.usu.edu/hscs/The%20HSCS%20Report.pdf					

VERMONT					
State of Vermont Department of Education			www.state.vt.us/educ/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	??
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Vermont's Equal Opportunity Act led to the Comprehensive Assessment System and the Accountability System based on Student Performance. Dropout rates are included in school report cards, but do not appear to be linked to accountability system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout report with definitions: http://www.state.vt.us/educ/schfin/dropout/dropout_fy01/droptitle01.html					

VIRGINIA					
Virginia Department of Education			www.pen.k12.va.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Virginia's Annual Accreditation Cycle, that is part of its accountability system, includes SOL (Standards of Learning) and SOQ (Standards of Quality). Dropout rates are collected in detail, but do not appear to be directly connected with accountability system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout instructions and definitions: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Dropouts/datacoll/Instructions.pdf Most recent dropout report: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Dropouts/do0001.html According to Janet Christopher (jchristo@mail.vak12ed.edu) state does not use a unique student identifier.					

WASHINGTON					
Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction			www.k12.wa.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Dropout rate reporting is required by law and improvement goals are authorized by law but have not yet been set.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Graduation and dropout statistics: http://www.k12.wa.us/dataadmin/reports/DG2000-01.pdf					

WEST VIRGINIA					
West Virginia Department of Education			http://wvde.state.wv.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Legislative Rule 2320, A Process for Improving Education – Performance Based Accreditation System (passed in 2001) includes specific goals for dropout rates: Section 4.3 states that the maximum student dropout rate is 5% in 2 of the most recent 3 years. Baseline data to be developed in 2002-03.			**Category 3:** State reports and evaluates dropout and/or graduation rates in its accountability system. **3B:** Numerical standard is used.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout definition: http://wvde.state.wv.us/data/report_cards/2001/appendix.pdf Each student record on the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS) has an ID: http://wveis.k12.wv.us/WVEIS_Documents/Standards_Manual.pdf Legislative Rule 2320 and accountability system: http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2320.html					

WISCONSIN					
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction			www.dpi.state.wi.us/		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	9-12	**Method:**	Cohort & Event	**Individual Student Identifier:**	No
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Wisconsin's accountability system is largely focused around performance on the WKCE (Wisconsin Knowledge & Concepts Examination). The required Wisconsin School Performance Report lists dropout rate but does not appear to be directly related to the accountability system.			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Dropout definitions (cohort rate used to determine graduation rate): www.dpi.state.wi.us/spr/doc/glossary.doc According to Richard Christofferson (Richard.Christofferson@dpi.state.wi.us) the state does not use a unique student identifier.					

WYOMING					
Wyoming Department of Education			www.k12.wy.us/wdehome.html		
Dropout Rate Data Collection					
Grade Levels:	7-12	**Method:**	Event & Cohort	**Individual Student Identifier:**	Yes
Incorporation of Dropout and/or Graduation Rate into Accountability System					
Wyoming accountability system is based on WyCAS (Wyoming Comprehensive Assessment System).			**Category 1:** State reports dropout and graduation rates but not in accountability system.		
Notes and Citations:					
Information on Student Record Identifier Program: http://www.k12.wy.us/statistics/sturecid.html Dropout report: http://www.k12.wy.us/statistics/actual.pdf Dropout event rates: http://www.k12.wy.us/statistics/event.pdf Graduation rate – opposite of cohort: http://www.k12.wy.us/statistics/graduates.pdf					

APPENDIX C: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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